

The Lavender Federation trail is a linear walking trail that begins its journey on the banks of the Murray River in Murray Bridge, SA. For 325 km it winds its way northward towards the Clare Valley ending in the town of Clare. You find yourself walking amongst some spectacular countryside, through fields of canola, and green paddocks with the company of sheep, cows and even kangaroos.

On this trail, you'll be serenaded by the sounds of the birds, you'll dodge a few wombat holes, be greeted by a myriad of wildlife and share a rock with the odd lizard or two. You stroll along country dirt roads, up rocky outcrops and a wander through the famous Barossa Valley Region.



You'll wander through bright yellow fields of Canola on this walk.

There is so much to see and unusual sights as well such as some very long necks reaching high into the treetops! Yes, giraffes along with the odd lion, zebra or even a rhino! This is because, through Rocky Gully, you pass by Monarto Safari Park - one of the world's largest open-range zoos.

I found walking in the Australian countryside and happening upon this sight unusual, but a real treat.



Flocks of sheep will keep you company on this journey.

History of the trail

This trail is named in the honour of the late 'Mr. Bushwalking', Terry Lavender. He was the architect for the trail and is a man who is also remembered for his part in the creation of the famous Heysen Trail.

In the late 1990's it was realised that the eastern side of the Mt. Lofty Ranges in South Australia offered a great location for a long distance walking trail with the ranges protecting the trail from harsh weather for most of the year. It was designed, built and is now maintained by a team of volunteers.



The trail is maintained by a group of dedicated volunteers called Friends of Heysen - and other walking trails.

The trail has many varieties of link and loop sections to explore and it connects to other trails including the Heysen and the Riesling trails. You also pass through townships including Murray Bridge, Tungkillo, Eudunda, Mintaro and Clare.

There is so much history to be found on this trail and in the towns you enter. Much of it goes back to the early 1800s and is well worth researching beforehand to find out more as you wander along. When you come across the town of Springton a must visit is the historical Herbig Tree. Friedrich and Caroline Herbig lived in this hollowed out River Red Gum tree (which is 300-500 years old) back in 1855 with the first 2 of their 16 children.



The towns you pass through are steeped in history.



Length

This trail is 325 km in length with an extra 100km of loops and spur trails to explore.

Trail markers

You will find this trail to be very well marked with reflective silver and green plaques with an arrow pointing the way. They are on posts, fences and even rocks. Although the trail is well marked it is recommended that you purchase and carry the maps for the trail.



Look out for the trail markers that are posted along the way.

Navigation - maps and guidebooks

With 6 maps in total, these can be purchased at many outlets including the [Lavender Federation Trail](#) website, Murray Bridge Visitors Centre and Clare Visitors Centre. The maps contain great information including the trail length and terrain, historical information of the area and more.



Even though the Lavender Federation trail is well marked, it's recommended to use a map.

What's the best time of the year to hike it?

It is recommended to walk this trail between the months of March and November. Remember Summer in Australia can be extremely hot and there is always a high risk of fire. Walking is not permitted on days of total fire bans.

Terrain

The terrain is varied and for the most part a comfortable walk with a few steeper and rocky sections. You will be travelling through many private farmlands and old dirt country roads.



It's a comfortable walk with some steep and rocky areas.

Accommodation

Camping is strictly prohibited at any point along the Lavender Trail, so you have to plan your accommodation ahead of time. The [Lavender Federation Trail](#) website has a full list of available places to stay along the route which you should check out.

What fitness level do I need?

You would need to have a relatively good level of walking fitness for this trail.



If you want to walk this trail, you will need to be in good shape. Image: Graham Hallandal



Gear to take

- Backpack
- PLB
- Maps and compass
- First aid kit and snake bite kit
- Hydration system and a LifeStraw (for emergencies)
- Wet weather gear
- Hiking poles
- Head buff and sun hat
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Mosquito net (for when the flies get bad)
- Sit-a-pon (waterproof mat to sit on when you have a break)
- Flask (to carry your coffee for your break time)
- Change of clothes, spare shoes and socks (for when in town)
- Battery charger (to keep your phone charged)
- Lunch box for your daily lunches

Water and food along the way

Be sure to fill up on water at the beginning of each day before leaving town as there are no resupply points along the way. It is recommended that you carry up to 3 litres each day. Carry the snacks and lunch you need for your days walk as there is nowhere along the way to purchase any food.



Take your food with you for each day so you can stop for lunch.

Safety and communication on the trail

It is important to always remember your safety is your responsibility. There is phone reception on some parts of the trail but it's unreliable so have plans in place before heading out each day. You want to have an experience that you want to remember, not regret.

- Tell people of your whereabouts and intended time of return
- Give a loved one your itinerary and contact them when you return
- Carry a PLB with you and place it where you can reach if needed, not inside your backpack
- Get the Australia wide Emergency Plus App
- Carry up to date maps as trails do change from time to time



- Always stay up to date with weather alerts and conditions
- Be aware of drivers on the country dirt roads, they may not see you
- Carry a first aid kit and snake bite kit and know how to use them
- Carry at least 3 litres of water per day
- Wear appropriate clothing for your hike
- In the case of a wildfire, stay calm, alert authorities of your whereabouts and try to head to an open area



Be safe when walking this trail, as some parts have no phone reception.

Useful information

- The Lavender Federation Trail website
- Emergency Plus App
- Police assistance 131 444
- For an emergency call 000 or 112 from mobile phones
- Check the BOM weather app for alerts

How do I get to the trail?

If starting in Murray Bridge it is a 50 min drive from Adelaide city. There are daily buses leaving the city throughout the day which takes around 2 hours. You can find more information on this at LinkSA.

If starting from the Clare Valley it is a 90 min drive from Adelaide or you can take a coach line with the York Peninsula Coach Lines. This service runs Monday, Wednesday and Fridays and weekends.



I decided to walk this trail by myself, and all up it took 9 days to finish it.

My walk

Back in 2015 I discovered this trail whilst researching another and decided it was worth exploring. At the time, the trail only went as far as Eudunda, (now it reaches Clare) and no one had ever walked it continuously before. As I'm from interstate, I decided that I would walk it in one go and it took 9 days to complete. It was an amazing experience to walk solo through rural South Australia and you can read more about my walk here. I hope to head back and walk the whole trail again in the very near future up to Clare.

I would like to acknowledge that this beautiful walk would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the Lavender Federation Trail Community. For anyone planning to take on this trail, I strongly advise you to contact them in advance to ensure the best experience possible.



What's your favourite South Australian hike?