

More stone fences in the Eudunda region.

# The good life

The Lavender Trail passes through some of South Australia's best wineries and rural areas offering bushwalkers plenty to experience.



**E**arly on a Saturday morning in Eudunda, SA a small group gathered to farewell us as we headed out along the newly-opened section of the Lavender Federation Trail en route to Murray Bridge. We were privileged to be the first to walk this section from Eudunda to Truro in the state's mid north, so new the map was only available the day before. And our farewell group was some of the enthusiastic Eudunda community members who were active in the trail's development through their area.

The Federation Trail was born some 15 years ago when 150 people walked the 18km from Murray Bridge to Monarto. The name was later changed to the Lavender Federation Trail (LFT) to honour the late Terry Lavender OA, the trail's architect and instigator who is better known for the Heysen Trail's existence. He wished to connect the Murray River with the Barossa and Clare valleys in SA's mid north region. Presently stretching 212km the trail is definitely a labour of love, as dedicated volunteers carry out all the planning, building, maintenance and publicity.

### **Backcountry and beyond**

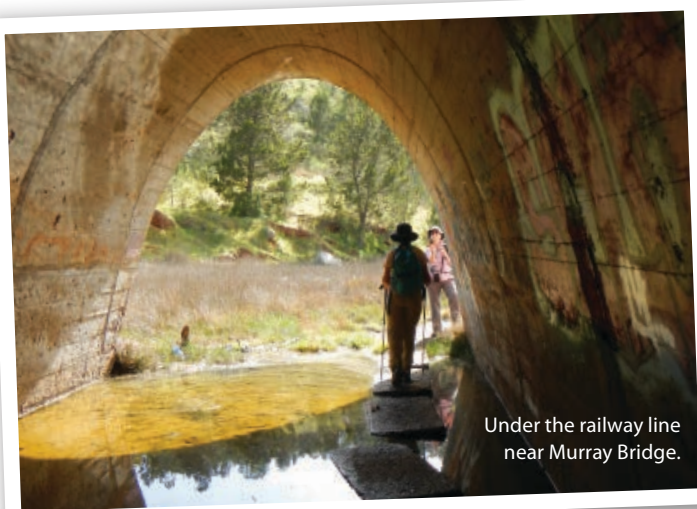
The trail criss-crosses rural South Australia in a wandering fashion, using many back lanes, private properties and road reserves along the eastern side of the Mt Lofty Ranges. Following old stone fencelines, you will walk past the lonely ruins of isolated stone cottages, once occupied by early German settlers, then left abandoned when crops and farming failed in the severe droughts of the late 1800s. The trail wanders amongst rugged rocky outcrops of ochre and brown, through fields dotted with majestic river red gums and beside gentle streams. In spring the constant vistas of fields of golden canola flowers contrasting with emerald green grain crops and the occasional white or mauve flowers of other crops create a patchwork landscape.

This is not a traditional bushwalk, but a meander through some of the state's finest wine growing and agricultural regions. Most of it is offroad and through private properties where some owners are very proactive in promoting and maintaining the trail and highlighting their properties best features. Walking the trail is a chance to visit some magnificent ravines and gorges the general travelling public never get to see.

Spring is the perfect time to walk this trail. Eucalypts are flowering red, pink and yellow and brilliant yellow wattles and wildflowers are everywhere. The countryside is lush and green and there is water in the streams which are generally dry in other seasons. Magpies are teaching their young to fly in the cloudless skies, kangaroos are bounding through the landscape and skinks are soaking up the spring sun.

### **A fortnight of fun**

Allow around 11-14 days to complete the whole walk. More if you are carrying a pack. Camping has issues as there are no designated camping areas, although you are allowed to camp on the road reserves and on private properties with the owner's approval. Alternatively walk into the nearby villages to access local accommodation. Otherwise, water drops or vehicular backup is



Under the railway line near Murray Bridge.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

1. Walking down one of the backcountry lanes near Eud.
2. Walking down to a rocky ravine near Truro.
3. Climbing over the many styles was easy without heavy packs.
4. We spotted many varieties of wattle blossoms.

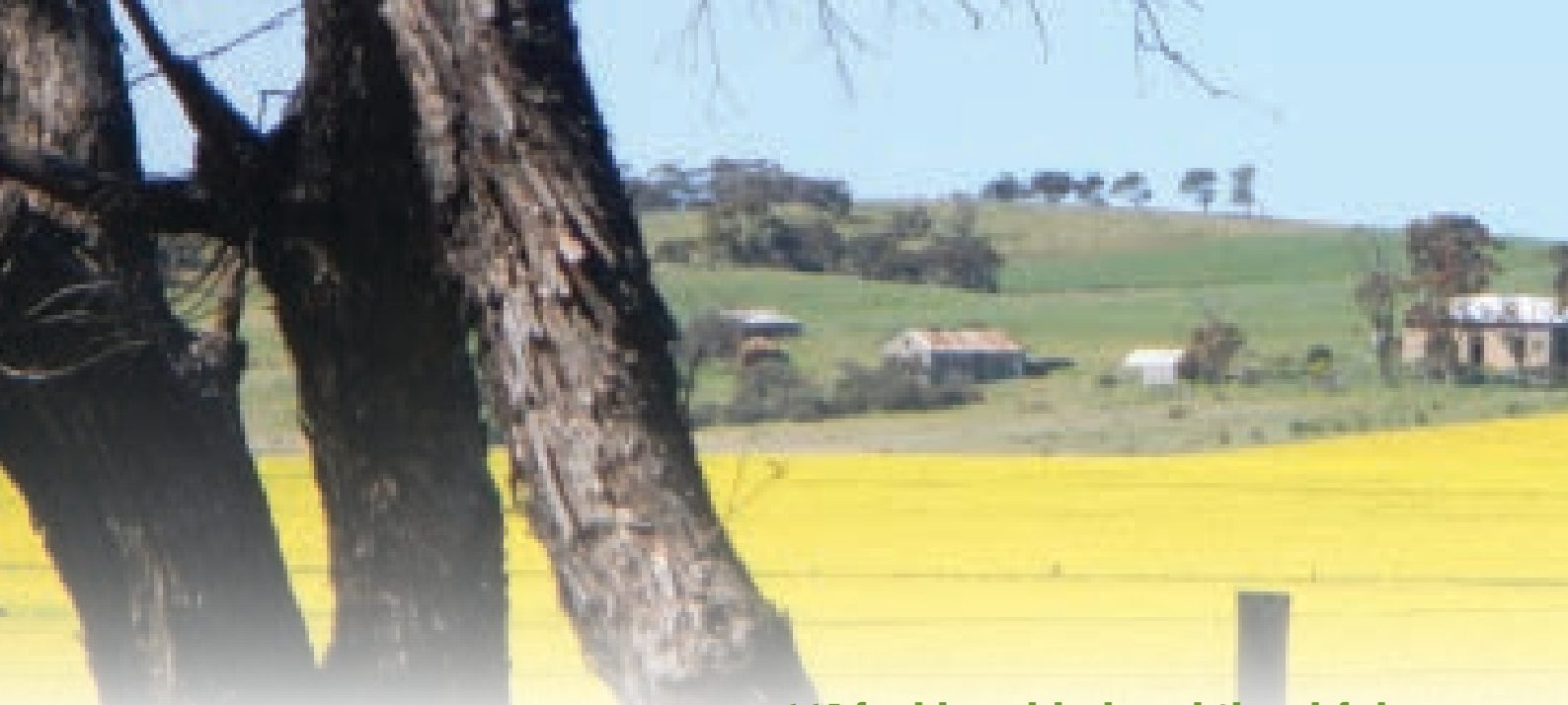


essential. Camping has its own rewards though. One evening we were excited to witness a lunar corona, having first thought it to be a moonbow. Imagine a full moon with light moist cloud covering. Starting with an unusually huge yellow orb, it expanded into glowing concentric rings around the moon in all the colours of the rainbow. Unbelievably beautiful and a sight never to be forgotten.

We walked the trail from north to south to have the sun on our backs. Eudunda to Truro is possibly the most spectacular part of the trail, weaving its way back and forth across the main Truro Rd, following farm fence lines and up and down steep gullies. We climbed the 512m Leake Lookout for extensive views in all directions, went past hidden waterfalls and more stone fences to The Gap, a watercourse through the hills to the edge of the escarpment with expansive views over the Murray Plains. Then topped it off with a walk down to and along a steep rocky ravine. The only down side was the constant styles to be negotiated over the many fences.

Try to deviate into the small towns along the way, even if not planning to stay at them. Although the trail does not go directly in to all the towns, they are worthy of being visited and





Walk notes

## LAVENDER TRAIL, SA

Time/distance: 11-14 days/212km | Grade: medium.



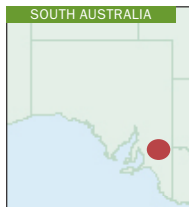
### Walknotes

**Eudunda to Truro:** 3 days/56km

**Truro to Springton:** 3 days/54km

**Springton to Mt Beavor:** 3 days/46km

**Mt Beavor to Murray Bridge:** 3 days/56km



“I feel humbled and thankful that someone has the foresight and dedication to make these walking trails happen.”

supported, and all have their own unique attractions. Eudunda was a participant in the South Australian Living Art Festival held annually in August, and a walk around town featured many fine exhibits, including a skinny mini, yarn bombed postal boxes and shop fronts and some rather unique garden art. Truro boasts a fine bakery and motel (great for wet days as we found out), a very pleasant wine tasting cellar and some specialty shops.

### Wine light

In Springton visit the Herbig Tree, a very large, hollow red gum thought to be over 300 years old, which was the first home of Friedrich Herbig. He married and had his first two children while still living in this tree on his property. Eden Valley is home to some very fine wineries, including Henschke Winery, one of the oldest wine names in the Barossa. Mt Pleasant has a growers market every Saturday conveniently next to the campground, two good pubs and a small grocery shop. In Moculta view the Shannon family mausoleum, where around 24 of their family members are interred. Tungkillo unfortunately has lost its struggle with economics, and apart from walkers being allowed to camp behind the hall, it has no other facilities, the pub and store having recently closed.

Yet rural South Australia is not without its excitement and events. Following a farm fence line, we came across a sheep caught in the fence. It had obviously thought the grass looked much sweeter on the other side, but unfortunately could only get its head through the fence and not back again. Three women to the rescue! One holding it down, and two pushing and pulling its head back through the fence. Success. And for gratitude, a short sharp mean kick to one of its rescuers as it staggered away to join the mob. Then that same day there was an armed robbery at nearby Mt Pleasant bank, the bandit escaping in a 4WD, causing quite a concern in the community.

Between Tungkillo and Murray Bridge we climbed Mt Beavor, from where we could see Mt Lofty, the Barossa ranges, glimpse the Murray River and in the far distance, spot the sandhills of the Coorong. But beware the wind. It was our constant companion for most days and made relaxing at the lookouts a little unpleasant.

The last kilometres into Murray Bridge are not without their special delights either. The trail travels along the fence of the Monarto Zoo, the largest open range zoo in Australia, where we

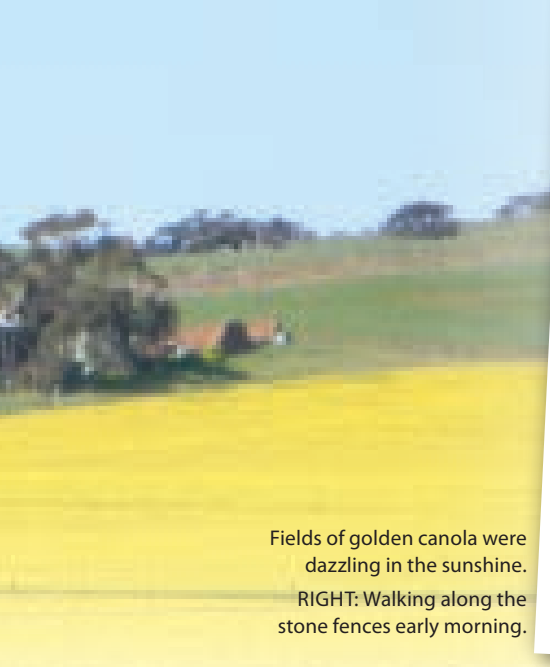
## **i** NEED TO KNOW

### Getting there

Murray Bridge is 80km east of Adelaide on Princess Highway. Eudunda is north east of Kapunda on the B81.

### Best time to walk

Between April and November, though Spring is the very best. Info and maps: [www.lavenderfederationtrail.org.au](http://www.lavenderfederationtrail.org.au)



Fields of golden canola were dazzling in the sunshine.  
RIGHT: Walking along the stone fences early morning.



spotted some giraffes, ostriches and Barbary sheep. After the zoo we feared walking the busy, boring bitumen roads into Murray Bridge. But no, happily the track follows the railway line through Rocky Gully Nature Reserve, a hidden treasure of large boulders and rocky outcrops. Then through pleasant woodland crown reserves, almost the only “bush” on the trail, and finally through bird-prolific wetlands to finish on the banks of the Murray River, where majestic paddle-steamers and houseboats cruised lazily past.

If time restricts walking the entire trail, there are endless possibilities for day and overnight walks. The trail can be accessed often from various roads and there are numerous loop trails around towns along the route. There are four strip maps for the trail and all show the various loop walks.

### A job well done

The Lavender Federation Trail is a trail in motion. It will move onto Hampden via an old railway corridor, and eventually to Clare where it can link up with the Riesling and Rattler Trails, making it well over 350km. It gets close to and will cross the Heysen Trail and in time there will be a network of trails intersecting each other making South Australia a highly desirable destination for walkers. With hidden ravines and gorges, the Barossa and Clare valleys, the Flinders Ranges, the Murraylands and a fabulous coastline, it is a state worth visiting.

And now, as I sit on the banks of the Murray at the end of our walk, enjoying a glass of good South Australian wine, I feel humbled and thankful that someone has the foresight and dedication to make these walking trails happen.



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