

## PLANNING THE HEYSEN TRAIL END TO END

Committing to the Heysen Trail is a serious undertaking in time, money and effort. It costs roughly \$2,500 (fuel, accommodation, park fees, tour operators etc.) and requires **team** commitment to make it workable, not withstanding the overall logistics to make it happen. A core group of about 10 walkers is ideal to see it through.

In the initial planning stage my focus was how to manage this trail to maintain interest as it can only be walked outside the Fire Ban season which means only 6 months of the year, not a lot of time to complete 1,200kms for those who are still in the work force.

Things to be considered were;

- ***How to manage the whole walk and Fire Ban Season?*** The first two camps dictated that we would continue to walk south to north, that was the easy bit! The shortest time frame to reasonably manage the walk would be over 4 years and to do this the trail was divided into two parts, The southern part, Cape Jervis to Wirrabara Forest, to be walked as weekend camps and day walks and the northern part as extended week long camps, walking both sections consecutively. This meant 5 weekends and a week long camp per year, a commitment of one Heysen activity per month during the walking season. The section through the Adelaide Hills area was done as Sunday walks over the summer so as not to use up valuable "walking season" time. Having said that, the walking season mainly applies to access over private property, this is to ensure, to the property owners, that no walkers will be on their property lighting campfires during the Fire Ban and to alleviate concern for evacuation in an emergency. There are three small sections of private property to walk through in the Hills area and permission from the property owners was obtained.
- ***Do we need vehicle access through private property?*** In some instances access to the trail is only by driving through private property and permission must be sought from the property owner. In this instance we pack walked through these areas eliminating the need for car access.
- ***Who would walk the trail?*** The walks were open to all club members not just the few committed end to end walkers. The overnight pack walks are highly suitable as qualifying walks and generally not technically difficult.
- ***What distance for each walk?*** Day walks were longer, sometimes covering over 20kms if the terrain was manageable, pack walks ranged from 12 -17kms on average with the shorter distance on Sundays for the drive home.
- ***How much pack walking and day walking?*** There is no point in pack walking along back roads around country towns particularly if we were staying in the caravan parks so these long flat sections were done as day walks from a base camp.

- **Where to camp?** Base camps were from a strategic point which meant minimal distance for car shuffles to conserve mileage and time. Overnight pack camps again were chosen on these economics plus the desirability of locations, trying to utilize as many remote campsites as possible.
- **How many cars?** We needed enough cars to place a car at each end of the planned walk and with enough seats for the whole group at each end, this always confused people as the mix of cars did not always take 5 passengers. 4WD cars had to be considered for the rough and sometimes muddy back roads and I always tried to have only one car to transport the drivers back to the start. A lot of wasted mileage and additional cost can be expended over a 1200km trail so we needed to distribute the car usage as fairly as possible, sometimes engaging in additional reimbursement to the drivers.
- **Safe parking for the cars?** Having done the trail before made it easier to choose some safe and secluded spots to leave the cars overnight. This was more difficult on the extend camps and time consuming so we engaged the use of private tour operators and stored our cars at local caravan parks.
- **Safety.** On all remote walks we carried the club PLB in addition to my personal PLB carried on all walks. Evacuation points were noted and a collection of phone numbers of rangers, police, tour operators, councils and visitor centres was available to all in the handouts. The point being, not all evacuations are worthy of a "000" call and can be simplified by calling on some help. Walkers were encouraged to conserve phone battery power for emergency use only. Too many walkers ignore this important fact and continue to run their phones down.
- **Who else is using the trail?** I would check when the Friends of Heysen (FOH) with their 70 something numbers were using the trail so as not to clash with parking, camps and general congestion. School holidays, public holidays and special events on the trail were avoided to minimise travel and accommodation issues.
- **Weather** The weather during the walking season is usually very mild as progress north. However the Fleurieu Peninsular and around Burra can have severe storms. Temperatures can get as low as -3 deg in the Flinders and in the low 30's by September.

With the completion of the trail you could look back at some of the extraordinary scenery and historical countryside coming out of it with a richer knowledge of this wonderful state and a closer bond with whom you have shared the experience. I highly recommend this trail as a club venture as it offers many qualifying trips and great for prospective leaders doing assessment walks. So far this club has only had three end to end groups.