

it's about the

Experience

Southern Ocean Drive

Avida Daydreams > South Australia

DURATION: 10-12 Days

TRAVEL: 600.9KM

DOWNLOAD MAP

SEE THE FLEURIEU, LIMESTONE COAST AND KANGAROO ISLAND.

Traversing the coast from the land of natural wonders on the Limestone Coast, to the untouched wilderness of Kangaroo Island and the sea and vines of the Fleurieu Peninsula, there's something to discover around every bend. Hit the road to uncover some of Australia's best wineries, most breathtaking beaches and jaw-dropping geological marvels. Here's our guide to the best things to see and do along the Southern Ocean Drive.

STAGE 1: PICCANINNIE PONDS

The otherworldly Piccaninnie Ponds are world-renowned by divers, with three unique diving hotspots all fed by freshwater natural springs. Plunge into the water and explore a surreal submerged forest where aquatic plants grow up to 15 metres below the surface and swim by majestic walls of white limestone carved out over thousands of years.

Pack your wetsuit and dive in to explore the 10-metre-deep First Pond before venturing on to the breathtaking 35-metre-deep Cathedral and the gigantic 100-metre-deep Chasm.

Divers are well catered for on the Limestone Coast with renowned dive-site, Kilsby Sinkhole, just half an hour away.

*Please note, you'll need a diving licence to snorkel or scuba dive.



Piccaninnie Ponds

STAGE 2: PICCANINNIE PONDS TO MOUNT GAMBIER

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 28 Mins | 32.7KM

Mount Gambier is a geological wonderland, home to extinct volcanoes, dazzling sapphire waters and an underground Garden of Eden.

The town's crown jewel, the famed Blue Lake, was once an active volcano but today, molten rock has given way to a 72-metre-deep lake filled with cobalt water.

Its less-known little cousin, aptly named Little Blue Lake, is equally impressive, and better still you can dive right into its blue depths. A favourite with the locals, this impressive swimming amphitheatre is surrounded by breathtaking sheer 10-metre limestone walls and boasts crystal-clear fresh water to refresh you from the drive.

Mount Gambier's wonders continue underground in the centre of town where you can descend into a subterranean oasis at Umpherston Sinkhole. Here, you'll discover a beautiful sunken garden set in a collapsed limestone cave now blanketed with flowers, plants and lush green grass thanks to a few local green thumbs.



Umpherston Sinkhole

With Mount Gambier uniquely set on the slope of a dormant volcano, the Crater Lakes Precinct provides the perfect place to relax and enjoy nature. Explore the Valley Lake Conservation Park, trail walks, disc golf park, adventure playground, boating facilities and picnic areas. Walk up to the Centenary Tower for a remarkable panoramic view overlooking the surrounding landscapes and out to coast.

Wander the City Centre on foot and take the City Heritage Walk to discover an impressive array of historic buildings and catch a glimpse into Mount Gambier's history. Spend time to explore the local shops, restaurants, pubs and cafes.



Centenary Tower

WHERE TO STAY?

Mount Gambier Central Caravan Park - (08) 8725 4427

Blue Lake Holiday Park - (08) 8725 9856

STAGE 3: MOUNT GAMBIER TO TANTANOOLA CAVES

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 22 Mins | 29.8KM

Hidden beneath an unassuming cliff-face 20 minutes' drive from Mount Gambier lies a magical cave dripping with stalactites and stalagmites.

Once an ancient shoreline, the sea has long since receded leaving behind a 30-metre-wide chamber adorned with pink and brown dolomite crystals.

Tantanoola Cave's impressive interior has been thousands of years in the making with countless hanging stalactites and floor-to-ceiling crystal columns making it one of Australia's most beautiful caves.

Learn about the history and geology of the cave from a local guide before donning your explorer's hat and delving in to explore the underground wonderland for yourself. This cave is also one of Australia's few wheelchair accessible caves.

Above ground, take advantage of the picturesque picnic grounds and the cliff top walking trail which offers panoramic views of the surrounding district.



WHERE TO STAY?

Tantanoola Caves Conservation Park - (08) 8734 4153

STAGE 4: TANTANOOLA CAVES TO COONAWARRA AND PENOLA

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 54 Mins | 76.1 KM

Take a break from the road and spend a few days sipping your way around South Australia's red centre, Coonawarra.

The ultimate destination for lovers of bold red wine, the limestone-rich terra rossa soil of this picturesque part of South Australia produces world-famous Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz.

More than 24 cellar doors pack the relatively small region, so set up camp for the night and spend a day tasting your way around renowned wineries including Penley Estate, Brand's Laira, Wynns Coonawarra Estate and Katnook Estate.

Feeling hungry? Nestled among the sea of vines, Penola is a picture-perfect country town dishing up a smorgasbord of food and wine experiences. Enjoy a long lunch overlooking the vineyards at Hollick Estates, stop in at Koonara Wines in the main street to taste a local drop or two or venture further to Mayura Station and dine at The Tasting Room, the ultimate in paddock to plate experience featuring mutli-award winning Wagyu beef.



WHERE TO STAY?

Coonawarra Bush Holiday Park - 0455 146 647

Coonawarra Caravan park - 0455 146 647

Penola Caravan Park - (08) 8737 2381

STAGE 5: COONAWARRA AND PENOLA TO ROBE

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 1 Hour 14 Mins | 112KM

Pull up at Robe and throw down your towel to soak up the sun at one of South Australia's chicest coastal destinations.

Well-worth an overnight stop on the Southern Ocean Drive, here you'll lounge on long sandy white beaches, kick back in cosmopolitan cafes and glam galleries and feast on some of South Australia's best seafood.

Wake up with a morning stroll along Long Beach stretching 14km of sandy-white bliss or drive right on to the sand and spend the day enjoying the surf. Take a quick dip, then stroll along the beautiful Obelisk Coastal Trail, passing Robe's historic old gaol ruins, jetty and marina.

Sample the smorgasbord of local seafood on offer (Robe is famed for its crayfish) and wind down with a local brew at Robe Town Brewery.

WHERE TO STAY?

Discovery Parks Robe - (08) 8768 2237

Robe Holiday Park - 0488 727 269

Sea Vu Caravan Park - (08) 8768 2273

STAGE 6: ROBE TO COORONG NATIONAL PARK

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 1 Hour 16 Mins | 126KM

Explore towering sand dunes, meander down quiet waterways and roam along snow-white sandy beaches.

Nature lovers will be richly rewarded on the Southern Ocean Drive at Coorong National Park. Stretching some 130km down the coast from the Limestone Coast to the Fleurieu Peninsula, the ecological diversity of this important wetland system is staggering.

Encompassing a string of saltwater lagoons and wetlands brimming with fish, spend a few days kayaking the tranquil waters, spotting abundant birdlife, lounging on picturesque beaches and discovering the important Aboriginal culture of the Ngarrindjeri people.

Make sure you stick around for dusk – sunsets over the Coorong are a sight to behold. Australian film lovers will also recognise it as the site where Storm Boy was filmed.

WHERE TO STAY?

Coorong National Park - (08) 8575 1200

STAGE 7: COORONG NATIONAL PARK TO LANGHORNE CREEK

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 46 Mins | 54KM

Home to the oldest recorded Cabernet Sauvignon vines in the world and fifth-generation winemaking families, Langhorne Creek is sprawling with vineyards and ancient gum trees lining lush river banks.

Langhorne Creek is the new destination for people ready to experience an old wine region through boutique cellar doors. These wine producers are making the beautiful soft tannin wines that the region has become renowned for. One of these is Angas Plains Estate Wines, awarded 5 stars by James Halliday 8 times since 2010 in recognition of the great colour, aroma and flavour of their wines, Angas Plains Wines is a must visit!

Angas Plains Wines serve their large range of wines and food at the Cellar Door where visitors can relax in an authentic vineyard setting. Voted the cellar door with best food in Langhorne Creek wine region by Gourmet Wine Traveller Magazine 3 years running and then best small cellar door, it is owned and operated by locals Phil & Judy Cross. So, treat yourself to a delicious gourmet platter or pizza to compliment your wine of choice."

Open 5 days Thursday to Monday 11 am. to 5 pm. Serving wine, lunches, pizzas and platters all day. available to everyone. So close to Strathalbyn. Just look for the signs off the Strathalbyn to Langhorne Creek road.



Exclusive to Avida Members, enjoy 10% OFF at the Angas Plains Wines Cellar Door and online!

How to take up offer:

Go to www.angasplainswines.com.au and enter code **AVIDA** at checkout.

OR simply print out the voucher below and present to the cellar door upon entry.

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Next stop, Bremerton Wines. Immerse yourself in their stunningly renovated horse stable and indulge yourself at the Vineyard Road Cellar Door. You'll love their range of wines and skin care products and you can sample your way through award-winning wine labels at Winehouse. With the jaw-dropping Fleurieu Peninsula coastline, world-famous McLaren Vale wines and lush Adelaide Hills right on Langhorne Creek's doorstep, it's the perfect base to explore the region.

McLaren Vale Wines



WHERE TO STAY?

Milang Lakeside Caravan Park - (08) 8537 0282

Strathalbyn Caravan Park - 0488 363 681

STAGE 8: LANGHORNE CREEK TO VICTOR HARBOR

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 52 Mins | 65.5KM

Next stop is Victor Harbor, a holiday town known for its horse-drawn tram, penguin colony and surf beaches.

If you happen to arrive between May and October you may be lucky enough to see southern right and humpback whales frolicking in the waters between Victor and Goolwa.

A stone's throw away is the neighbouring seaside town of Port Elliot where you'll discover some of the best beaches in South Australia plus homewares shops, stylish cafes and chic, beachside cottages.

Walk the trails along a dramatic coastline, wander through the charming streets admiring the town's historical facades, stop for lunch at the Flying Fish Cafe or try the famous donut flavour of the month at Port Elliot Bakery (think flavours like Espresso Martini, lemon cheesecake and Tim Tam) before settling down at The Summer House or Mill Estate Cottage.



Victor Harbor Horse Drawn Tram

WHERE TO STAY?

Victor Harbor Holiday & Cabin Park - (08) 8552 1949

NRMA Victor Harbor Beachfront Holiday Park - (08) 8552 1111

Adare Camp and Caravan Park - (08) 8552 1657

STAGE 8: LANGHORNE CREEK TO DEEP CREEK CONSERVATION PARK

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 37 Mins | 43.3KM

Only an hour's drive south of Adelaide, Deep Creek Conservation Park is the perfect spot to stretch your legs after a day of driving.

A popular hiking spot for locals, here you can wander more than 15 walking trails taking you through some of the most stunning bushland with dramatic coastal views, waterfalls, pristine beaches and lots of wildlife like Kangaroos and koalas along the way.

Jump on a guided walk with Southern Ocean Walk to traverse the historic Heysen Trail through some of the most breathtaking sections of the park with the knowledge of an experienced local.



Heysen Trail

STAGE 9: DEEP CREEK CONSERVATION PARK TO KANGAROO ISLAND

TRAVEL TIME APPROX: 2 Hours 29 Mins | 124KM *This route includes a ferry

Home to pristine beaches, rugged wilderness, diverse wildlife and incredible produce, Kangaroo Island is the ultimate island escape.

The epic finale to the Southern Ocean Drive, Kangaroo Island is separated from the mainland by a narrow strip of ocean – you will be catching the SeaLink Ferry from Cape Jervis to Penneshaw.

Get back to nature and swim with dolphins in crystal-clear water, kick back on the sandy-white shores of stunning beaches, traverse through sprawling national parks packed with wildlife and taste test your way through an impressive bounty of culinary experiences.

With so much to see and do, you'll want to set aside a few days to really experience island life.

Start your food journey at Sunset Food and Wine – the Island's newest food destination. If you're after great food, spectacular views of the ocean and a relaxed atmosphere, you'll be right at home perched on the deck. Sunset Food and Wine specialise in modern Australian cuisine with a focus on seafood and local, seasonal produce as its hero. Head Chef Jack Ingram was formerly the Executive Chef of Southern Ocean Lodge, so we grant you permission to expect attention to detail.

Next-up, take a gastronomic trip to Kangaroo Island Spirits, conveniently located just outside Kingscote. We highly recommend you bring a designated driver as it's almost impossible to say no when sampling their huge range of gins. The distillery is rustic, family operated and intimate with staff who know and love their gin. Indulge yourself with a glass or two, surrounded by Kangaroo Island's spectacular scenery. It'll be the most impressive gin and tonic you've had!



Kangaroo Island Wilderness Tours provides you with a once-in-a-lifetime wildlife experience. Follow a passionate team of locals as they show you Kangaroo Island's most spectacular sights all from the comfort of a luxury four wheel drive vehicle. Get acquainted with Kangaroo Island's unique wildlife, travel to some of the Island's most beautiful locations and top it off with a two-course barbecue lunch complimented by exceptional Kangaroo Island wines.



The eastern part of Kangaroo Island is incredibly picturesque. The area includes Cape Willoughby lighthouse, Antechamber Bay and the stunning seaside town of Penneshaw. You can also get another perspective from the water by taking a tour with Kangaroo Island Ocean Safari. On tour, you'll swim with wild dolphins and seals in crystal clear waters, encounter Osprey, Sea Eagles and Wedge Tail Eagles. If you'd rather stay dry, then book the 75 minute coastal cruise and soak it all in from the comfort of the boat. If you're on the north coast near Emu Bay can also swim with dolphins with Kangaroo Island Marine Adventures or catch some fish with Emu Bay Fishing Charters.

WHERE TO STAY?

Kangaroo Island Seafont Holiday Park - (08) 8553 1028

Discovery Lagoon Caravan & Camping Grounds - 0412 422 618

This article was written in conjunction with South Australian Tourism Commission.

For more information about road trips in South Australia, go to southaustralia.com.