

South Australia

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watching for whales as you cycle past **The Bluff** (p235)
- Riding atop the eroded cliffs at **Port Willunga** (p238)
- Sampling the **Mawson Trail** (p241) on the Wines & Climbs ride
- Whooshing down **Gorge Rd** (p251) as you descend back towards Adelaide from Birdwood
- Swapping wheels for wines through **Seppeltsfield** (p249)

TERRAIN

Most of the state is undulating, with few mountains of any note. There are short, sharp climbs through the Mt Lofty Ranges, draping down into gentle valleys and coastal plains.

Telephone code – 08

www.bikesa.asn.au

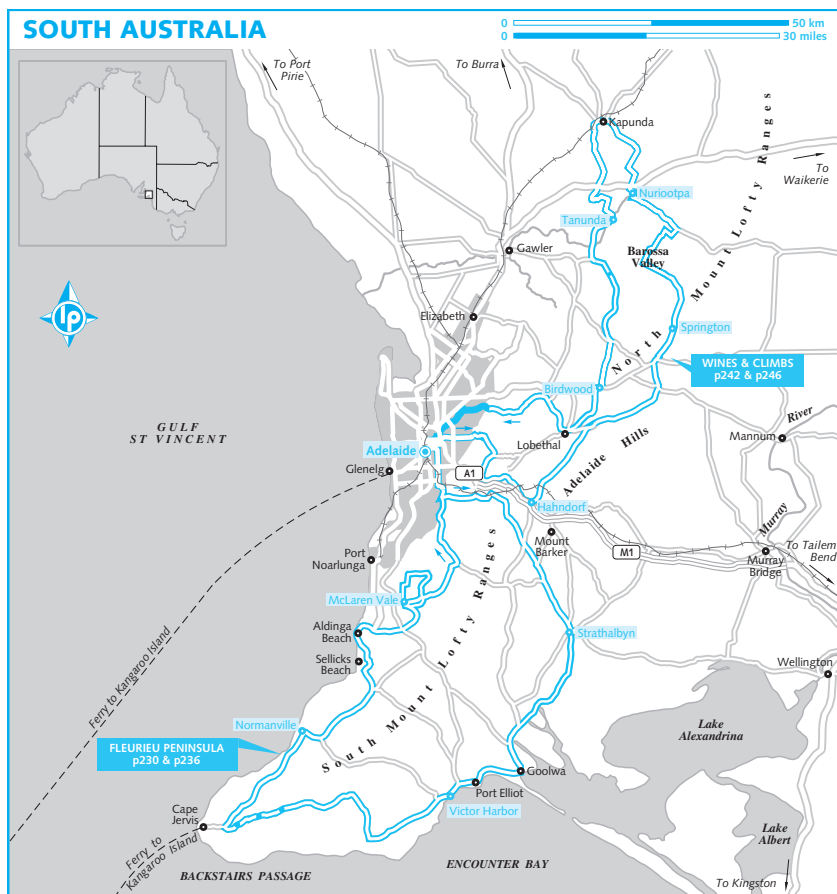
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In some ways, South Australia (SA) is the country's cycling heartland. Home to Australia's only Pro Tour event and the finest long-distance mountain biking route in the country, it's a state that could have been created by a cycling god. Why else the pancake-flat plains of Adelaide and its suburbs?

In Australia's driest state you don't have to ride far from the capital city to get the sense that you're flirting with the outback, though you don't have to endure desert deprivations to experience it. The rides detailed in this chapter loop out from Adelaide into the Barossa Valley and around the Fleurieu Peninsula, taking cyclists past wines, waves and whales while showcasing the best (and, at times, the hilliest) of the land surrounding the capital. As a bonus, both cycling tours intersect with sections of the Tour Down Under, the bike race that opens the Pro Tour season each January; with panniers on, time trial yourself up Menglers Hill or Sellicks Hill at your peril.

The Wines & Climbs route through the Barossa Valley also offers a lingering glimpse of the Mawson Trail, the mountain biking route that connects Adelaide to the glorious Flinders Ranges, South Australia's outback treasure, in the state's mid-north. One of the longest signposted cycling routes in the country, and arguably the most challenging, it is another reason to stay and play a while longer in the state where bikes could be king.





ENVIRONMENT

Covering 12.8% of the country, South Australia (SA) is Australia's fourth-largest state and its lands are the most protected in the country – more than 20% of the state is covered by conservation parks of some sort. The Great Victoria, Simpson, Strzelecki and Sturt Stony Deserts form a cap across the north and west of the state, seemingly held aloft by a mountain range that runs from the Strzelecki Desert south to Cape Jervis – both rides in this chapter cross this range at its lower, less-dramatic southern end.

As you ride you will see plenty of SA's bird emblem, the magpie, but not its mammal emblem, the southern hairy-nosed

wombat. The state is home to four species of kangaroo: red, western grey, eastern grey and the euro, while koalas are easily sighted in the Mt Lofty Ranges.

The landscape is dominated by fire- and drought-tolerant plants such as acacias (wattles), eucalypts and saltbush. Most obvious are the larger eucalypts, especially the river red gums that grow along water-courses throughout the state, the blue gums and candlebarks of the Mt Lofty Ranges, and the sugar gums of Kangaroo Island. There is a distinct boundary between the eucalypt-dominated communities of the south and the acacia communities further north. The massed, rich purple flowers of Salvation Jane (also known as Patterson's

