



# BEACHES AND BICYCLES IN ADELAIDE

*During the Tour Down Under, the South Australian capital is a magnet for cycling fans and this short circuit shows off the region's highlights.*

**W**e're at one of Adelaide's bustling restaurants, enjoying a glass of wine. The Tour Down Under has the city full to the brim and it's the night before our group ride. There's some animated discussion about the following day's challenges ahead: the climbing, the descents, the wildlife we might spot.

Some of my fellow riders have come from across the country, while others, like me, have come from different parts of the globe. I've come only as far as New Zealand but there are riders from Singapore, Japan, England and Germany. In fact, I'm only one of approximately 40,000 visitors here this week.

The Tour Down Under transforms this sleepy South Australian city with all the fanfare of a European Grand Tour. The nine-day race was first held in 1999, and in 2007 was the first event to gain UCI Pro Tour status outside of Europe – guaranteeing all of the world's top professional teams would be present. Indeed, even the once-mighty Lance Armstrong used the Tour Down Under as his comeback race in 2008. Adelaide, once a year, becomes the hottest cycling destination on the planet. I'm eager to see if it lives up to the hype.

The morning dawns clear and warm. I'm mentally checking off everything I need – shoes, kit, sunscreen, snacks, helmet, coffee. Definitely more coffee. Luckily someone had already thought this through, as the departure point for the ride – The Glasshouse – is also one of Adelaide's top cafes. While the barista works on the

fuel we need to kickstart our metabolisms, introductions are made and friends reunited. There is a small mountain of bikes leaning against the wall and still more riders are rolling up. Although there are smiles all round, some are more nervous than others.

I can soon see why: the route we have planned is a challenging one. We head straight out for the hills. The city rolls past us and we navigate the outer suburbs along Greenhill Rd toward Mt



