Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail
Creating one of Australia’s great walks
OUR GOAL:

To be recognised as one of Australia’s great walks.
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Kangaroo Island (KI) is South Australia’s premier nature-based tourism destination and one of the State’s two designated national landscapes. The Kangaroo Island National Landscape Strategic Tourism Plan 2013 identified the need for a multi-day walk on the island as a “hero” experience that would have significant flow-on benefits for the island and for South Australia’s tourism brand. The tourism plan recognised that a multi-day walk was a critical strategy, ensuring that KI could maintain its leading position against growing competition from other nature-based destinations in Australia and overseas.

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, the South Australian Tourism Commission and the Kangaroo Island Futures Authority collaborated to complete a feasibility study and initiate the project.
In 2014 the South Australian Government committed $5 million for the construction of the KI Wilderness Trail. In 2015 the Commonwealth Government provided an additional $500k to support the trail development as part of the Tourism Demand Driver Infrastructure program.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail is located predominantly in the Flinders Chase National Park on the western end of Kangaroo Island. Flinders Chase National Park is a rugged wilderness featuring iconic landmarks such as the world-famous Remarkable Rocks and Admirals Arch.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail will provide a new, internationally competitive multi-day walking experience. The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail will encompass new trails and trail upgrades through Flinders Chase National Park, Kelly Hill Conservation Park, Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area and sections of private property. The trail will be complemented by four dedicated overnight camping areas. Potential also exists for privately built and operated on-park eco accommodation.
Kangaroo Island holds many secrets waiting to be discovered. None is more rewarding than the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail.

The 64 km Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail offers a unique nature-based experience, giving visitors access to one of the most rugged, remote and spectacular coastlines in Australia.

This section of south-west Kangaroo Island is renowned for its rare and diverse wildlife, pristine bushland and sweeping coastal views.

Imagine: the isolation; the serenity; and the natural wonders of this special part of South Australia, and all while walking alongside the vast, awe-inspiring expanse of the Southern Ocean with nothing between you and Antarctica.

But then you won’t be all alone. You will be surrounded, even if you don’t realise it, by Kangaroo Island’s array of wildlife, curious to know who else is enjoying this special part of the world they call home.
Immersing yourself in the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail will make you feel privileged in the knowledge that much of this area is unchanged since the first Aboriginal inhabitants. Your inspiration will run high, for a moment sharing a sense of discovery with the early European explorers taking their first glimpse of this remarkable part of the world.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail is set to become a world-class, iconic attraction of South Australia, and a sought after destination for local and overseas visitors.

But not only will the trail leave you with everlasting memories, it also provides the opportunity to access established attractions including Remarkable Rocks, Admirals Arch, Hanson Bay and Kelly Hill Caves. It also encourages people to stay a while and soak up the sights and sounds of the area and the many broader attractions of Kangaroo Island.

Each day of the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail is brought to life in the following pages.
Commencing at the Flinders Chase visitor centre, day one takes you to the famous Rocky River Platypus Waterholes where you may encounter the rare and iconic Platypus. From here you pass through dense native vegetation with abundant bird life and native animals that is regenerating after the devastating fires in 2007. Arriving at the lookout you will see the meandering Rocky River far below you, flowing towards the Southern Ocean.

The riverbank and mallee habitats provide stunning arrays of colour in winter and spring, with a diversity of wildflowers and fungi. As you traverse your way down from the ridge the Rocky River cascades are an unexpected spectacular sight. Surrounded by sugar gums and ancient old growth cup gums, the Snake Lagoon campsite is a peaceful and beautiful setting for the first night’s rest.
Day 2

Snake Lagoon to Cape du Couedic

The trail heads south to the mouth of the Rocky River then turns south along the coastline of the wild Southern Ocean. On this section, with wind and salt spray on your face, the smell of the ocean mixed with the fragrance of ancient and colourful coastal plants, walkers experience the stunning and rugged beauty of the Flinders Chase National Park.

Seafarers found this wild coast unforgiving and ships have been wrecked along the coastline costing the lives of many.

Arriving at the historic Cape du Couedic walkers are taken back in history to the Cape du Couedic lighthouse, a famous landmark and navigational aide for shipping still in use today. The three lighthouse keepers’ cottages still remain and are used today for tourist accommodation.
Cape du Couedic to Sanderson Bay

An early start will include an optional walk to Cape du Couedic via Weir’s Cove to view the spectacular geology of Admirals Arch. Here you will be enchanted by the antics of our Australian and Long nosed Fur Seals, and the occasional Australian sea-lion.

Heading east towards Sanderson Bay the track enters dense coastal mallee country before breaking out to the awesome sight of the iconic Remarkable Rocks. It is from this point where you will truly experience the rugged wilderness of the south coast of the island.

North of Sanderson Bay you will be greeted by an isolated and protected campsite where you can relax and rest amongst the wildlife and listen to the sounds of native birds and the rustle of the island’s nocturnal inhabitants.
Sanderson Bay to Grassdale

Day four takes you from Sanderson Bay eastward to the spectacular coastal scenery of Cape Younghusband. The trail then meanders through to the beautiful Hanson Bay where you will cross the South West River, marking the gateway to the Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area.

You will then follow the winding river to Kelly Hill Conservation Park and the historic Grassdale property. At sunrise and sunset you will encounter Kangaroo Island kangaroos as they emerge from the shelter of the native vegetation into the open grassland to feed.

The area was settled by the Edwards family, pioneers in the early settlement of the western end of the island. The original cottage is now heritage listed and is only a short walk from the campsite. At night you will be serenaded by the calls of a thousand frogs, hear the sombre calls of Southern Boobook owls and the eerie cries of a bush stone-curlew or brushtail possum.
Day 5  
⏰ 3.5 hours  🚶‍♂️ 7 km

Grassdale to Kelly Hill Caves

The final day’s walk is somewhat more leisurely but no less spectacular and beautiful. The trail passes through unique vegetation and spectacular freshwater lagoons providing habitat for a diversity of woodland and wading birds and a valuable water source for wildlife.

A relatively short walk through a beautiful sugar gum woodland brings the trail to its conclusion at the famous Kelly Hill Caves.

Walkers should ensure they have time to take a guided tour through the spectacular Kelly Hill Caves.
The benefits
1. Creating a world class attraction

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail has all the qualities of an iconic, world-class attraction: abundant and diverse wildlife, striking coastlines and inspiring geological formations. It also complements existing attractions, is well supported by the tourism industry and is blessed with comfortable walking weather.

The increasing popularity of nature-based tourism is a world-wide trend. The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail responds to this demand, providing a sustainable product that is strengthening South Australia’s international profile as a quality, nature-based tourism destination.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail will appeal to visitors seeking a more active and immersive holiday option catering to both commercial and independent walking groups. A feasibility study that surveyed 800 walkers found that 85% were likely or very likely to visit Kangaroo Island within the next five years having learned about the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail.

Key elements of the trail are:

- Diversity of experiences for visitors that weave a distinctive, authentic and compelling story about this unique area of Kangaroo Island.

- Sensitive and sustainable infrastructure design that look after the natural, wilderness and heritage qualities of the area.

- Opportunities for private sector partners to provide a range of services from transport logistics and guided tours to low impact eco-sensitive accommodation options for walkers seeking a little extra comfort.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail will rank amongst other great walks in Australia, including the Overland Track in Tasmania, Victoria’s Great Ocean Walk and the Larapinta Trail in the Northern Territory.
2. Supporting Island community

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail builds on the Island’s strong identity as a clean, green destination. It reinforces the well-respected and known KI brand and adds a new, compelling reason for tourists to put the Island on their destination list. It also gives visitors a reason to extend the duration of their stay, enjoying many of the other attractions and activities the island has to offer.

Tourism on Kangaroo Island already generates around $54 million annually and supports 560 jobs, with parks a major drawcard.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail is predicted to attract an additional $4.4 million annually to the Island economy with benefits for a range of trail-based businesses including guiding companies, equipment suppliers, passenger transport, accommodation providers, and local food and wine producers.

Spin-off benefits will also accrue to all businesses, community groups and individuals on the island, creating an overall lift in visitor numbers, supporting the open all year initiative, increased economic activity and importantly, a sense of health, vitality and wellbeing.

The trail intrinsically promotes healthy communities, reinforcing our essential connection with the natural world and encouraging people, both visitors and locals, to get out there and be active.

The trail suits a range of skill levels and abilities and the pace and duration will help address mental fatigue, providing a sense of solitude and quiet. It will be a source of artistic inspiration and expression; and provide an opportunity to learn about nature and cultural history.

Walkers will embrace the prospect for contemplation, reflection and inspiration, invoking a sense of place and a feeling of connection with Kangaroo Island.
3. Boosting South Australian tourism

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail responds to a growing world-wide demand for quality, nature-based tourism experiences, enhancing the international profile of Kangaroo Island and South Australia as a quality tourism destination.

Kangaroo Island known across the world for its iconic destinations such as Seal Bay and Remarkable Rocks. It is a place that is treasured by South Australians and locals alike and, increasingly, by international visitors. It already attracts a greater percentage of international visitors than any other tourism destination in South Australia.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail will reinforce South Australia on the international radar as a premier tourism destination, highlighting the need and demand for sustainable, well-designed visitor experiences.

The trail will contribute to one of the State’s top-10 economic priorities – South Australia - a growing destination choice for international and domestic travellers. (Government of South Australia, Aug 2014).

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail weaves a unique and compelling story, one that strengthens the State’s already lucrative tourism industry, an industry that employs more than 30,000 people and contributes $5.2 billion to the State’s economy.
4. Protecting Nature and Wilderness

The natural and wilderness values of western Kangaroo Island are renowned for their abundant and unique wildlife; rugged, undisturbed coastlines; diverse vegetation communities and awe-inspiring geological formations and heritage sites.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail gives visitors the capacity and means to experience these wonders while ensuring their protection. The Trail underpins the importance of looking after natural places; to protect biodiversity and offer aesthetic and appealing spaces.

In particular, the trail allows visitors to immerse themselves in the parks of south-west Kangaroo Island, enriching their understanding of nature, and the importance of looking after it. It encourages people to be active and engaged with the natural world while ensuring the protection of natural and cultural features and minimising impacts on threatened species.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail is being developed in line with the four guiding principles of visitor management in the parks of South Australia (People and Parks, DEWNR 2013):

**Conservation first**
The ecological values of parks must not be compromised through their use for recreation and tourism.

**Appropriate access**
People should have a reasonable opportunity to enjoy access to parks and learn about their natural and cultural features.

**Community service**
Parks are an integral part of the landscape and play an important role in supporting healthy, vibrant and prosperous communities.

**Responsible management**
Decisions about the way parks are used should be based on evidence, risk assessment and adaptive management principles.
What’s next

Trail development

Creating a world class trail takes time. Extensive planning including environmental risk assessments has already been undertaken. An outline of key development activities are set out below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Milestone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trail planning and design</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campsite design</td>
<td>Complete by September 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trail Construction</td>
<td>Complete by March 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campground construction</td>
<td>Complete by May 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Official Opening</td>
<td>September 2016</td>
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</tbody>
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Management

Park management plans for the four reserves at the western end of Kangaroo Island – Flinders Chase National Park, Kelly Hill Conservation Park, Ravine des Casoars Wilderness Protection Area and Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area – set out how these areas will be conserved and managed consistent with the objectives of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*.

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail will help to contribute to the goals of these park management plans, however a minor amendment to the plans is required to communicate how development associated with the trail will be managed.

The public has been invited to provide their views on these amendments from August 2015 until November 2015.
Commercial opportunities

The Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail provides a catalyst for a range of commercial opportunities to be developed to support and compliment the trail and the experience of its users.

To help shape these opportunities DEWNR have invited businesses to put forward ideas during September and October 2015.