

## WINDING DOWN THE COAST: A DAY TRIP FROM ADELAIDE TO VICTOR HARBOR



Some days just beg for the open road, a thermos of coffee, and no particular schedule. That was our mood setting out from Adelaide—destination: Victor Harbor, via the scenic Fleurieu coast. This easy day trip is more than a drive; it's a chance to dawdle through beachy detours, soak up salt air, and rediscover simple pleasures at seaside towns that haven't lost their soul.

With just one day, our goal wasn't to rush. Instead, we picked a few well-loved beaches, grabbed a bite by the ocean, and let Victor Harbor's slow pace steer the afternoon.

### Rolling south along the coastal route

We left Adelaide just after breakfast, heading down Main South Road. Rather than taking the direct inland route to Victor Harbor, we veered off towards Port Willunga and stuck to the scenic coastal drive wherever possible. This part of the Fleurieu Peninsula is a treat: winding bends, vineyards peeking over hillsides, and glimpses of the ocean that get bigger and bluer the further south you roll.

Even before the beaches proper, it's the landscape that pulls you in. Olive groves, historic stone homes, and paddocks dotted with sheep all hint that you're leaving city life behind.

### Top beach stops along the Fleurieu Peninsula

Our first proper stop was **Port Willunga**. Famous for its beach caves and old jetty pylons, it's one of those rare spots where history, nature and beauty collide. The golden cliff faces glow in the morning light, and the water was calm enough for a paddle. We walked the beach barefoot, coffee in hand, and marvelled at how quiet it still feels even with its growing reputation.

Next came **Aldinga Beach**, where you can still legally drive your car onto the sand. It's a novelty that never wears off. While we didn't pull out the esky and deck chairs this time, we did grab a takeaway flat white and sat near the dunes to watch kids flying kites and pelicans skimming the water.

**Sellicks Beach** was our final coastal stop before heading inland toward Victor. This beach has a more rugged look—bigger skies, dramatic cliffs, and fewer crowds. It's a place where you can just breathe for a while and let the pace of the day drop back a gear.

### Arriving in Victor Harbor

We rolled into Victor Harbor around midday, entering via Encounter Bay. The vibe was spot-on: a working coastal town with heritage bones and an easy-going personality. There's a whiff of nostalgia to Victor—horse-drawn trams, seafront rotundas, and the sort of main street that still has a proper bakery and a second-hand bookshop.

The foreshore area was buzzing but not busy, and we parked up near Warland Reserve to stretch the legs.

### Granite Island and seafront strolls

No visit to Victor Harbor is complete without crossing the iconic causeway to Granite Island. You can walk it, or if you're feeling playful, take the historic horse-drawn tram that runs daily when the weather cooperates.



We opted for the walk—fresh sea air and sweeping views of the Southern Ocean on either side. Granite Island itself is dotted with interpretive signage, wildlife (including the odd penguin), and plenty of spots to perch on a rock and take in the expanse.

There’s a bit of climbing involved, but nothing too taxing if you take your time. Definitely wear decent shoes—thongs aren’t ideal on this terrain.

**A long lunch at a coastal favourite**

Hunger set in right on cue. We’d pre-booked a table at **Nino’s Café**, a much-loved local favourite right in the thick of town. It’s got that ideal balance of casual dining and proper plates—just what you want after a sea-spray morning.



We ordered the grilled local whiting with lemon butter sauce and a serve of calamari for sharing. I went with a Clare Valley Riesling while my wife opted for a blood orange

spritz. The food was honest, fresh and unpretentious—exactly what you'd hope for from a coastal lunch.

**Soaking up town character and heading home**

After lunch, we wandered the main drag, popped into a local gallery, and watched a few brave souls trying their luck at the end of the jetty. There's something low-key lovely about Victor. It hasn’t gone full tourist circus, and there’s plenty to discover without needing a checklist.

By mid-afternoon we pointed the bonnet north again, full, relaxed, and sun-kissed. We took the same coastal road home, just a little slower this time, as the golden light stretched across the paddocks and the hills glowed softly in the rear-view mirror.

**My verdict**

If you’re after a fuss-free day trip with the right mix of scenery, good food and beach-time, the Adelaide to Victor Harbor route delivers.

You can make it as slow or spontaneous as you like—there are countless little detours, wineries and cafés en-route. Just don’t forget the windbreaker, and definitely make time for the Granite Island walk. It’s still one of the best views on the South Australian coast.

**ITINERARY TABLE**

| Time  | Activity                        | Cost (approx.) | Notes  |
|-------|---------------------------------|----------------|--|
| 08:00 | Depart Adelaide                 | —              | Take the scenic Main South Road via Fleurieu Peninsula |
| 09:15 | Coffee stop at Port Willunga    | \$12           | Walk the beach caves, grab a takeaway                  |
| 10:15 | Beach drive at Aldinga          | Free           | Park and drive on the sand (legal zone)                |
| 11:00 | Quick stroll at Sellicks Beach  | Free           | Enjoy the cliffs and peaceful surrounds                |
| 12:30 | Arrive Victor Harbor            | Free           | Park near Warland Reserve                              |
| 12:45 | Walk to Granite Island          | Free           | Use causeway or horse-drawn tram (\$15 if chosen)      |
| 13:30 | Lunch at Nino’s Café            | \$65           | Whiting, calamari, drinks for two                      |
| 14:45 | Browse town, art gallery, jetty | Optional       | Unwind before return drive                             |
| 16:00 | Depart Victor Harbor            | —              | Drive north via scenic route                           |
| 17:15 | Arrive back in Adelaide         | —              | Golden hour drive return                               |
|       | Total Estimated Cost            | \$77 AUD       | Excludes optional extras                               |