



# ROBE

Naturally Engaging

Coastal Walk   Scenic Walk   Heritage Walk   Inland Walks

## ROBE'S 15KM SCENIC TRAIL

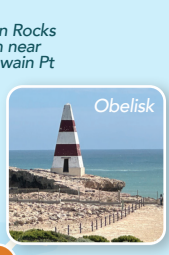
The 15km Robe Adventure Trail is a journey through a landscape where ocean, lakes, coastal dunes, wetlands and history come together. Start here:

- 1. Soldier's Memorial** | Cr Smillie Street and Victoria Street: First World War memorial and German naval mine which was found planted offshore & towed to Long Beach for deactivation in 1996.
- 2. Norfolk Pine Trees** | Mundy Terrace: along Robe's famous foreshore, the trees were planted to honour Robe citizens who served in World War I.
- 3. The Chinese Memorial** | Mundy Terrace: Remembers the 17,000 Chinese who landed at Robe between 1857 and 1863 on the lure of the Victorian goldfields. See here the seawall and jetty site - 3 jetties were built between 1842 and 1866 & "Pai Fang" Welcoming Gate.
- 4. Royal Circus & Customs House** | Royal Circus: The Flagstaff was erected when Governor Frederick Holt Robe & Surveyor Thomas Burr took the first theodolite bearings for the town in 1846. The Matthew Flinders Memorial Seat commemorates the first English survey of the southern Australian coast by Captain Matthew Flinders in 1802. From here you can see Baudin Rocks named by Flinders after Captain Nicolas Baudin who led the French naval expedition which carried out the first survey of the South East Coast & Guichen Bay. The Cannon is reputed to be from the barque "Koning Willem II" wrecked in 1857.
- 5. Lake Butler Marina** | Lipson Terrace: is the home of our crayfishing fleet & recreational boats. Lake Butler is a natural lake that was once closed to the sea. Fishermen used to moor their boats out in the bay during fishing season, and then drag them across the sand hills to moor in Lake Butler during the winter weather.

- 6. The Breakwater** | end of Karatta Road: built in 1964 from Kingston Granite. Adjacent is Karatta Beach & Robe Yacht Club.
- 7. Robe Jetty** | off Obelisk Road: the first 2 jetties built in Robe were unsatisfactory for longevity and use through mistakes, poor research and missed opportunity. The current jetty is Robe's 4th jetty & the 3rd Government jetty. This was built in 1950 to provide a landing place for Robe's commercial fishing fleet. It is still used today by local & visiting anglers and those wanting to view the sunrise.
- 8. The Old Gaol** | Obelisk Road: was built about 15 years after settlement in 1860 to house prisoners who had formerly been sent to Adelaide for trial. There were a number of escapes where prisoners assaulted guards & on one occasion, picked their way through the gaol walls. The walls were later reinforced with boilerplates from the Admella ship wreck.
- 9. The Obelisk** stands proudly on the point of Cape Dombey. A local builder erected the 40-foot Obelisk in 1855 for \$460 to act as a landmark for shipping & to contain rocket fired lifesaving equipment for stricken ships. The structure was originally white, but Captains found it difficult to differentiate it from Long Beach's white sand hills. In 1862 it was repainted in alternate red & white bands. On a clear day, it can be seen from 20km away. Eventually tidal erosion will result in the Obelisk collapsing into the sea. \*Vehicles are not permitted to drive into the Obelisk carpark anymore. Park at Old Goal and walk to view the Obelisk.

- 10. Doorway Rock** | Adam Lindsay Gordon Drive: with its "doorway" created by the constant crashing of waves on the Limestone.
- 11. Factory Bay** | Adam Lindsay Gordon Drive: was originally the site of a canning factory that used to can snipe and rabbits. After the World Wars it was used as Robe's rubbish dump before people had an awareness of protecting the environment. Hotel green & brown bottles were dumped here & washed back into the cove. The area was also known as Glass Beach from the polished sea glass.
- 12. Robe Lighthouse** | Adam Lindsay Gordon Drive: was built in 1972 to replace the Cape Jaffa Lighthouse and is fully automatic and unmanned.
- 13. West Beach Lookout & West Beach** | Adam Lindsay Gordon Drive: walk over the dunes to experience the back boggy beaches. No swimming
- 14. The Old Cemetery** | 'Holloran Street: was built in 1857 as the original cemetery area. The site was first selected in 1849.
- 15. Robe Sports & Recreation Ground** | 'Holloran Street: local football, netball, squash & tennis.
- 16. Robe Golf Course** | Morphett Street: a new 18 hole course was opened in November 2019.
- 17. Lake Fellmongery (Ski Lake)** | Lakeside Terrace: This large freshwater lake was given its industrial sounding name in 1853 when a fellmongery was established there to wash wool salvaged from a wrecked ship in Guichen Bay, the barque Duilius.

- 18. Beacon Hill Lookout Tower** | Beacon Hill Road: The rebuilding of the Robe Lookout Tower at Beacon Hill took place as part of the Robe "150" Celebrations in 1996. The old wooden structure was removed and replaced by a circular paddock stone tower offering panoramic views of Robe. It was also used as a navigational aid for fishermen and was formerly called "One Tree Hill".
- 19. Drain L** short walk in the mangroves
- 20. The Overpass** | Main Road. View across bird watching lake from the bridge. Watch for traffic.
- 21. Long Beach** | Esplanade: is a safe family beach with gentle surf & is quite unique as it is one of the few beaches where you are able to drive your car onto the sand. A unique part of Robe's heritage.
- 22. The Outlet** | Cr Esplanade & Dawson Drive: is where the lakes drain to the sea, this area is popular for waterbirds including pelicans, ibis & egrets, & great for exploring.
- 23. Lake Charra** | Main Road: is a breeding spot for Drain Reserve | Main Road: Drain L is one of the many man-made drains that crisscross the South East and earlier this century converted the area from swamps to fertile farming land. It links the small lakes which are popular bream fishing spots.
- 24. Town Beach** | Mundy Terrace: is also a safe family beach & is where VacSwim swimming lessons take place. Explore Girl and Boy Rock (or Butchers Rock).



on a speculative basis for later sale to the Bank of South Australia in 1860 for £3,752.

**15. Campbell Cottages** | 26 Smillie Street: were first built as a single storied building dwelling for a Scottish apothecary with the upper storey and shop being added when 1/2 the building was leased to the National Bank.

**16. Criterion Hotel** (now Cornerstone Cottage & Criterion Cottages) | 28 Smillie Street: was built by George Lord in the 1850s to service the needs of the upper class & business clientele.

**17. George Lord's Horseshoe Forge** | 30 Smillie Street: was built in the 1850s.

**18. Davison's Shop** | 32 Smillie St built in 1855.

**19. Greymasts** | 38 Smillie Street: was originally built in 1853 by George Ormerod to store wool salvaged from a shipwreck. Greymasts later helped accommodate 80 girls sent to work on pastoral properties from Mosquito Plains to Mt Gambier. Robe's renowned historian Kathleen Bermingham also lived at Greymasts.

**20. School in Rotten Row** | 8 Davenport Street: was a private school for girls built in the 1860s.

**21. Patsy Ryan's Cottage** | 10 Elizabeth Street: was once occupied by one of Robe's identities Patsy Ryan, an Irish migrant.

**22. Blind Barlow's Tom Peppers Cottage** | 11 Union Street: formerly occupied by this poet, basket weaver & "Good Templar".

**23. The Lodge** | 1 Main Road: was built in 1850 as a Butcher Shop and residence.

**24. Bermingham's Cottage** | 28 Victoria Street: was built after 1858 on an allotment of the new "Village of Syleham"

**25. William Savage Cottage** | 22 Victoria St: were constructed by Robe's main stonemason & builder William Savage in the 1850s.

**26. Attic House** | 18 Victoria Street: was built in 1869 as a tailor's shop with a high, distinctive upper storey. W.T. McLean made suits and riding silks for the famous poet & horseman Adam Lindsay Gordon & other gentlemen.

**27. Wilson's Saddlery** | 5 Victoria Street: William Wilson handcrafted first-class saddles that were much prized by the horsemen of the district.

**28. Caledonian Inn** | 1 Victoria Street: was built in 1859 by a Scotsman Peter McQueen. Several upstairs rooms were fitted with scroiled teak doors salvaged from the shipwreck, "Koenig Willem de Tweede".

**OUTSKIRTS**

**29. Karatta House** | 7 Karatta Road: is a magnificent "holiday home" built in 1863 by a wealthy grazier, and used by the then Governor of South Australia Sir James Ferguson as his holiday home from 1869-1873.

**30. Lakeside Manor** | 22 Main Road: (next to Lakeside Caravan Park) was built for George Affleck who transformed from a labourer into a "gentleman" on inheriting an English Baronetcy in the late 1880's. His work included washing wool in Lake Fellmongery. \*not shown on the map

**31. Bush Inn** | 82 Main Road: This inn was licensed between 1861 & 1871, being one of several roadside inns that served teamsters who bought wool bales into Robe piled high on bullock & horse drays during the busiest years at Robe. This Cobb & Co stop was also licensed as Newton Arms.

**The Institute & Smillie Street**

Begin at the Robe Institute, the centre of Robe's social and cultural life since the 1860s. Funded by public subscription and built on the former Village Green, it remains one of Robe's most important heritage buildings. Along Smillie Street you'll find historic landmarks including Davison's Shop, George Lord's Horseshoe Forge, the former Criterion Hotel, Campbell Cottages, Bank House and the oldest section of the Robe Hotel, originally known as the Bonnie Owl.

**Royal Circus & Robe's Port**

Continue uphill to the Royal Circus, once the bustling heart of Robe's port. Key sites include the Customs House Museum, Old Telegraph Station, Police Precinct, Ormerod Cottages and the Chinese Memorial and Pai Fang Gate, commemorating the thousands of Chinese migrants who landed at Robe en route to the Victorian goldfields. Nearby are Robe House, Moorakynne House and Our Lady Star of the Sea Church.

**Sturt & Davenport Street**

Sturt Street showcases some of Robe's oldest homes and churches, including St Peter's Anglican Church, the Free Presbyterian Kirk and Granny Banks' Cottage. Davenport Street features the former Bible Christian Chapel, the School in Rotten Row and George Ormerod's former wool store.

**Victoria Street**

Once Robe's main commercial thoroughfare, Victoria Street is lined with historic cottages, former businesses and local landmarks. Highlights include Patsy Ryan's Cottage, Attic House, Blind Man Barlow's Cottage, the original Robe Primary School, Bermingham Cottage, Harbour Master's Cottage, The Lodge, Wilson's Saddlery and the Caledonian Inn. The walk concludes back at the Robe Institute, home to the Visitor Information Centre and Public Library. Although Robe's port declined after the arrival of railways elsewhere in the region, many of its original limestone buildings survived, giving the town one of the most intact collections of nineteenth-century heritage architecture in South Australia.

Cottages later housed an accountant, private school teacher, doctor, lawyer & the assistant gaolkeeper during boom times.

**8. Old Police Stables** | Lot 301 Frome Street: built in 1864, the Robe Police Stables form part of the former Courthouse complex. Robe had 3 mounted policemen responsible for a huge geographical area both for police duties and delivery of mail. Following the decline of Robe as an international trading port, the Stables were converted to a garage and horses were replaced by police cars. This site was also where 26 mounted red coats kept their horses during the "Chinese Invasion"

**9. Robe House** | 1A Hagen Street: was the first substantial stone house in Robe and was built in 1847 as the official residence of the Government Resident in the South East.

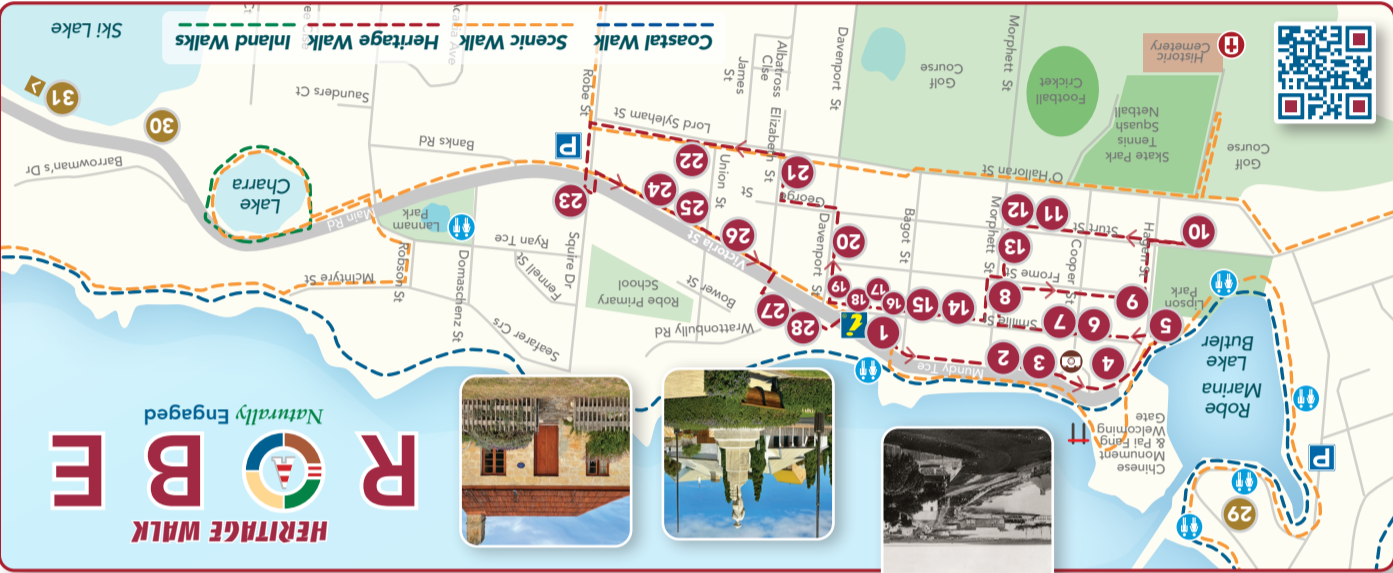
**10. Moorakynne House (Green Gables)** | 4-6 Sturt Street: was built in 1853 by George Ormerod, whose company conducted all of the export trade & most of the import trade during Robe's boom period as a port.

**11. Free Presbyterian Kirk** | 22 Sturt Street: Robe's first church and a small and unassuming building built in 1858.

**12. St Peter's Anglican Church** | 24 Sturt Street: was built 1859 by the local gentry.

**13. Granny Banks' Cottage** | 15 Sturt St: built in several stages with the oldest section dating from 1846. It was first rented to government personnel, then occupied by George Ormerod while Moorakynne was being constructed. Arthur & Sarah (Granny) Banks bought the cottage in 1855 and lived there until 1900.

**14. Bank House** | 24 Smillie Street: was designed by architect Edmund Wright & built around 1857 possibly by George Ormerod



**ROBE'S HERITAGE WALK**

Enjoy your walk around the town and learn about our heritage and enjoy the towns shopping or cafes as part of your journey.

**Amazing Coastal Experience**

Step back in time and discover the rich history that shaped Robe into one of South Australia's most significant coastal settlements. Founded in 1846, Robe quickly grew from a remote government outpost into a thriving international port, connecting the South East to Adelaide, Melbourne, London and beyond. Its streets, cottages, churches and public buildings tell the story of pioneering settlers, maritime trade, wool exports, Chinese gold seekers, shipwrecks and the characters who built the town.

This **self-guided Heritage Walk** takes you through the heart of historic Robe, where many of the original limestone buildings still stand today. Along the way, you will explore the bustling port precinct, grand merchant homes, early churches, government buildings and workers' cottages that reflect the prosperity and ambition of Robe's boom years.

Allow approximately 1.5 to 2 hours to complete the walk at a leisurely pace. Take your time, enjoy the heritage architecture, and soak in the stories that continue to make Robe one of South Australia's most fascinating historic seaside towns.

**Robe's 10 Interesting Historical Facts**

- 1. Robe was founded in 1846**, just ten years after South Australia was established as a colony.
- The town was named after South Australia's fourth Governor, **Sir Frederick Robe**.
- During the 1850s and 1860s, **Robe became South Australia's second busiest international port**, trading directly with London and other overseas destinations.
- More than **16,000 Chinese migrants landed at Robe** between 1857 and 1863 before walking over 400 kilometres to the Victorian goldfields.
- The iconic **Cape Dombey Obelisk**, built in 1855, was originally painted white before being repainted with red and white stripes to improve visibility for sailors. The limestone used to build the Obelisk was hauled to the site by a team of **32 bullocks**.
- Robe was connected to Adelaide by the **South Australian Magnetic Telegraph** in 1858, making it one of the earliest regional colony towns to receive telegraph communications.
- The Customs House**, built in 1863, managed shipping, customs and maritime activities for much of South Australia's south-east coastline.
- Robe House**, built in 1847, was the first substantial stone residence in the town and served as the home of the Government Resident.
- The town's prosperity was driven largely by the **wool industry**, with thousands of bales exported annually through Robe's port.
- Prisoners held at **Robe Gaol**, built in 1860 after transporting offenders to Adelaide was costly and difficult. Prisoners broke through the gaol walls, making authorities reinforce the cells with iron boiler plates salvaged from the wreck of the **Admella**.

**1. Robe Institute** | Mundy Terrace/Smillie Street: was built in 1868 and during Robe's heyday was the heart & soul of the community as a popular venue for many social occasions, including a Picture Theatre. Additions were built to the Institute in 1983.

**2. Robe Hotel** | 4 Mundy Terrace: has been continuously licensed since it was opened as Robe's first hotel, "The Bonnie Owl" in 1847.

**3. Old Telegraph Station** | 2 Mundy Terrace: where the first telegram was received in Robe on 20 July 1858 via the South Australian magnetic Telegraph.

**4. Customs House** | Royal Circus: is a roundabout encircling a small sand hill & was the focal point for the original planned government town of Robe. It was also used by bullock drays throughout Robe's days as a busy port. The Customs House was built in 1863 & used for 25 years as a Customs House & office of Harbour Master & Receiver of Wrecks for the SE coast as far as the Victorian border. It now houses the Maritime Museum.

**5. Our Lady Star of the Sea Chapel** | 2 Hagen Street: built in 1858, one of the first 3 Catholic Churches to be built in S.A.

**6. Courthouse** | 8 Smillie Street: where the Government Resident was Magistrate.

**7. Ormerod Cottages** | 10 Smillie Street: were built to house Ormerod's staff in 4 self-contained dwellings. Ormerod

**The Robe Heritage Walk**

**Starting from the Robe Visitor Centre**