

Feeling a bit proud of myself: In 2015 I cycled 4,504 kilometres, climbing a total of 30,923 metres.

For a woman who could barely ride up a hill when I started a few years ago that's pretty amazing!

By Helen D

Like most people, I learned to ride a bike as a kid, then used it as my main commute while I was at university and hadn't done anything since.

After we moved to South Australia in 2010 I got interested in the Mawson Trail, a long-distance cycling trail which stretches from Adelaide to Blinman in the Flinders Ranges. In 2012 I got hold of a bike and on a crisp, clear winter's morning I made my first attempt on the Mawson Trail from Castambul up towards Lobethal. I didn't know it at the time but this is probably the hardest section of the trail. I was exhausted after pushing my bike up most of the hills and had to turn back after only a few kilometres. Clearly this was going to need some training but the country had been spectacular and I was hooked.

The next step was to start doing part of my commute to work by bike. Most days I drove the car early to Paradise and cycled in 10 km in the morning and another 10 km back to the car at the end of the day.

In October 2013 I found myself unexpectedly retired early. I knew straight away that I wanted to improve my cycling and began to join some of the beginners' programs offered by the Salisbury Council through Cycle Salisbury and its wonderful volunteer leaders. It was a great opportunity to meet like-minded people, make friends and learn more about cycling from some experts. The rides are generally 15 to 20 km long and mostly flat.

Through the Cycle Salisbury program I met other friends who were interested in cycling the Mawson Trail and in 2014 and 2015 we cycled many sections of the trail so that in autumn this year I have only about 100 km of the total 900 km left to do. (PTO)



In 2015 I joined some cycling groups in the Adelaide Hills to improve my hill riding capability. I use a smart phone app called Strava to record my rides – kilometres travelled and metres climbed. I find that using this app really helps me to keep my motivation up.

I can't complete this article without mentioning my husband. He is not a keen cyclist himself but he has certainly been a strong supporter of my cycling. In fact he claims that I am "better behaved" when I have been cycling and if I start nagging or am discontent he says "Time you were out on that bike again!"

Cycling is a great sport because you don't have to be "sporty" or athletic to do it (although of course some people are). I am still slow (I average only about 13 km/hour) but I'm happy because I am getting out and exploring new places in a way that I can still hear the sounds of the bush or come across a kangaroo or a koala before they hear me.

As I was growing up my school reports for sport always said "Helen tries hard". (Translation: Helen is a cooperative child but is hopeless at sport.) Well I may be slow but according to my Strava app, in 2015 I have cycled over 4,500km, climbing over 30,000 metres. For me, that's a big achievement.

*Editor's note "Thank you so much for sharing Helen. Well done...Keep up the Great work !!*