



# TOURISM

by Bill Nehmy

**BN:** Welcome James, please can we start with your early years, where you were born, went to school, your early plans and aspirations?

**JS:** Thanks Bill, I grew up in the foothills in Hawthorndene and stayed there through my school years finishing at Blackwood High.

The area around me was actually really formative for me growing up and my aspirations, on reflection.

Having Belair National Park as your extended backyard shaped a real love for the outdoors.

My early career, however, was more business focused and I was between Adelaide and Melbourne, working in private equity, so when a role came up at Cleland Wildlife Park, rolling my tourism studies and business experience into one, moving back to Adelaide full time seemed an obvious choice.

I've now been at Woodhouse for 3 years, and absolutely love it! I pinch myself most days at having 54 hectares in Piccadilly as an office, it's impossible to have had day working at Woodhouse!

**BN:** Please can you elaborate on Woodhouse Activity Centre, it is not just a place for school camps and scout meetings!

**JS:** If you grew up in Adelaide, chances are you'll have a memory of Woodhouse on a school camp... or, more specifically, the Mousetrap on Challenge Hill!

Many may have forgotten (or perhaps never knew) that they can come back for the day with friends and family to unleash their inner child on the activities or pitch a tent and camp around a fire circle.

Really, we're all about offering a safe and convenient space to step away from electronic devices and re-connect with nature.

Owned and operated by Scouts SA for over 60 years, Woodhouse offers experience-based group accommodation for school camps, but it's also a popular venue for corporate conferences/team building events, cultural and community groups, as well as bespoke weddings (because why have a wedding day when you can have a wedding weekend?).

We have five unique styles of accommodation on the 54-hectare

property, ranging from a two storey heritage-listed mansion to small, rustic chalets for family get aways; a purpose built conference centre that sleeps 80 and space for bush camping as far as the eye can see.

Our awesome onsite activities are suitable for kids of all ages and include two epic Tube Slides, a giant split-level maze, 9-net Disc Golf, 30 obstacles up Challenge Hill and seven orienteering course that are yours to enjoy as a guest staying on site, or you can head in just for a day.

A lot has changed over the last couple of years alone with new activities and upgrades across the site, so if it's been a little while since your last visit, it's definitely worth stopping by again to check it out!

**BN:** If you have visiting friends or relatives and you want to give them a memorable Adelaide Hills day, what do you recommend?

**JS:** Only one day? There is too much to see and do to fit it all in!

But if I had to choose, a pretty wonderful day in the hills would start off at Cleland Wildlife Park for 'Breakfast with the Birds', it's a lovely experience and absolutely the best time to see the park.

Then off to Woodhouse (of course!), for a round of disc golf and a rush down the tube slides, finishing with a lap around famous Challenge Hill.

After working up a huge appetite, it has to be lunch at The Lane, its beautiful food and stunning views make for a memorable experience.

Continuing on our wine education, the afternoon would have us visiting the nearby amazing wineries, perhaps Tapanappa, Bird in Hand and Deviation Road to name a few.

The evening would have to be a walk down the main street of Hahndorf to breathe in that beautiful crisp Adelaide Hills evening air and taste some local produce before heading on to the Stanley Bridge Tavern for dinner where the head chef's cassoulet and an Adelaide Hills pinot would complete a pretty perfect day.

**BN:** As a recent appointment to the Board of Adelaide Hills Tourism as Deputy Chair, what do you think is the most significant tourism opportunity waiting to be realised in the Adelaide Hills?



**JS:** I'm really proud to have been appointed to the AHT Board, they are wonderful ambassadors of such a special region.

Access has always been an issue with the hills, getting up and back can prove quite tricky for such a wide spread region.

So advocating for more transport choices along with opening up more accommodation options for visitors to overnight and obviously spend longer in the hills is a key priority.

**BN:** Please share any other key interests/activities that might surprise us!

**JS:** Any chance I get, I'm down the South Coast for a surf, I find it's a great time to centre myself and de-stress.

I'm also a spokesperson and advocate for the MS Society, I was diagnosed with MS 4 years ago and I'm very keen to support such an important organisation that supported me through my diagnosis.

Other than those interests, my main source of happiness is spending time with my wife Louise and our 3 year old Joseph, any time spent with them is pure joy.

**BN:** What advice would you give a young person in respect to finding the right career and to have an enriching life?

**JS:** I'm terrible at advice! But I guess simply, be open to opportunities. I have never had much of a strict plan in regards to how my life was going to go.

Sometimes you have to roll with what comes, be resilient in the face of difficulty, and realise opportunity when it presents itself. And perhaps don't take life too seriously, fun and adventure are never overrated!