



TOURISM

by Bill Nehmy

This month I am pleased to introduce one of our most passionate Adelaide Hills advocates, Mikyla Gilbert from The Haus Group.

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

MG: I spent the first several years of my life in the area just between Balhannah and Verdun – locals will know this as Ambleside. I went to a few schools in the Adelaide Hills starting at Oakbank Area School, Aldgate Primary School, Mount Barker South Primary School and Mount Barker High School. From as young as I can remember I wanted to be a journalist, in fact I used to interview my family dogs with a hairbrush pretending to be Jana Wendt from *60 Minutes*. I dreamt of working at the Mount Barker *Courier* then starring in a TV show promoting the Adelaide Hills.

Funny enough, I did start my journalism career at the Mount Barker *Courier*, and was in fact the editor of this very community newspaper, the *Weekender Herald*. In 2008 I had the joy of launching my own magazine, *Adelaide Hills Magazine* and successfully published 21 quarterly award-winning editions before selling the business due to illness.

It hasn't mattered where I have worked, *SA Great*, Adelaide Oval, *Fritz Magazine*, Newstyle Media or marketing consulting to Beerenberg Farm, Hahndorf or Newenham Estate ... I have always found a way to promote the great stories from our incredible Adelaide Hills region. I have a personal slogan "I'll show you my Hills, if you show me yours!"

BN: You have diverse experience promoting the Adelaide Hills. 'Coming home' in your role of marketing the Haus Group and assisting Hahndorf Business & Tourism Association must be very satisfying?

MG: Oh my gosh, I am so thrilled to have the opportunity to find the next chapter of my career back up in my beloved Hills and my favourite Adelaide Hills town, Hahndorf. Working only eight-minutes-drive on mostly dirt roads and not a freeway, traffic jam or red light in sight is amazing.

The only traffic jam I get caught in is the occasional cow, kangaroo or koala taking up the road. I have joined the Duffield family's business The Haus Group as the Marketing & Digital Manager at an incredible time.

My role with the Hahndorf Business & Tourism Association with social media management and marketing is also fulfilling my passion of promoting Hills stories



Mikyla Gilbert producing one of her weekly Facebook Live shows

and sharing what's happening in the village. Check out the weekly Facebook Live show where we showcase a different businesses each week!

BN: What do you think is the most significant tourism opportunity waiting to be realised in the Adelaide Hills?

MG: Wellness as a tourism drawcard. For decades I have been shaking my head as to why investors have not built on the global success of Adelaide Hills based organic skincare giants like Jurlique? And other companies like Janesce, Natulus, Hemp Hemp Hooray, and smaller brands, Coco Marie, Yard Skincare, Alcome. Co, Beeswax Natural Health & Harmony, Hahndorf Creek Skincare, Hahndorf Soap Factory and many more.

With our beautiful natural environment, proximity to Adelaide and the airport, we honestly should be the day spa capital of Australia... Not Daylesford Victoria, Palm Cove Queensland or Byron Bay New South Wales.

We also have an abundance of natural spring water, beautiful walking trails, historic and cultural significance, well-preserved architecture, many more boutique wineries than the Macedon Ranges, incredible multi-award winning restaurants, chocolatiers, artisans, delightful shops and shopping experiences, stunning gardens, golf courses, yoga schools, healers, organic and produce markets, art galleries, a variety of accommodation options... but we

have yet to package this all together as a region and take the crown for day spas and wellness tourism, even just in South Australia. But, what we can offer with the right investments and marketing could easily rival anything interstate.

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

MG: I'm always learning, but the advice I give my daughter about career is that you are never too old to find your passion and don't be pushed into one. If you are lucky enough to know from a young age what you are interested in, then great.

My advice to you is find everything you can online, videos, websites, case studies, lists of potential businesses to work for, social media accounts etc and deep dive into gaining knowledge. If you can meet people in that field and ask them questions, do it.

If you can get work experience, do it. Learn as much as you can, before you commit to a massive HECS debt, study a degree you hate or end up in a job that is nothing like what you dreamed it to be. But in saying all that... you can always pivot, backflip or even start again. Don't put limits on yourself, be open to opportunities that could turn out to be the best part of your life.

Thanks Mikyla for giving us the opportunity to get to know you better. Your ongoing enthusiasm and advocacy for the Adelaide Hills is welcome!