

# Hints and Tips for Multiday Bike Tours in Victoria

## Introduction

A multiday bike tour is when you go away riding for a few days at a time. It's a very enjoyable way for a bike group to spread its wings and go further afield.

More planning and effort is required than for a day ride but the rewards are well worth it

## Bike tours

Victoria has the best network of rail trails in Australia. These former railway lines have been converted to usually excellent trails that are used by cyclists, walkers and horse riders.

They're very good for multiday bike tours because:

- there is little or no riding on roads,
- they usually have very good facilities (toilets, shelters, water and signage),
- generally easy to ride,
- very peaceful,
- it's straightforward to organize your own accommodation, transport etc,
- it's very economical.

Gently riding along a quiet and peaceful rail trail, taking in the bush and scenery on a lovely day and in good company is a pretty hard combination to beat.

To find out about Victoria's many rail trails visit: <https://www.railtrails.org.au/trail-descriptions/victoria>

There are many other possibilities for multiday bike tours in Victoria using roads and other types of trails but OYB reckons rail trails are the best first choice for seniors.

As a group becomes more experienced and adventurous there's also the option of doing tours in other states... and other countries.

## Safety and leading the ride

Please read the pages on safety at <https://onyerbike-u3a.org.au/bike-safety/>.

Please read the pages on leading a ride in the <https://onyerbike-u3a.org.au/setting-up-a-cycling-group/>.

### Keeping the group together.

We like to keep the group together during our tours.

The role of the sweep is more important than usual.

It's also more important than usual for the leader(s) to be aware of how everyone is travelling on the ride.

Regular headcounts are necessary, especially for more than say 10 riders.

Although very unlikely it's possible for someone to go off the trail into a ditch or similar, become incapacitated and for no one to see this *if the group is too strung out*.

Differences in strength and endurance are more obvious on a tour. The group can end up very strung out along the trail and lose sight of each other. Or faster riders may openly express disgruntlement at having to ride at what they consider too slow a pace.

One option is the stronger riders in the group head off at their own pace BUT with the understanding that they are on their own and if they need help (eg an accident or breakdown) then they'll have to wait until the main group arrives.

It's upto the leader(s) how this is managed. A good idea is to keep in mind what the group is about and how it does things. Don't let one or two people 'take over' the ride or pressure other riders.

### Accidents, injuries, emergencies and fatigue

- Most rail trails usually have good access to roads but not always. The leader(s) need to be aware of those parts of the trail with poor vehicle access in case of serious injury and the rider needs to be evacuated.
- **Local** numbers of police, ambulance, hospitals, SES and CFA need to be carried on the ride, preferably by everyone.
- Local conditions can change quickly eg fire, flood, severe weather, trail obstructions or damage. The group needs to understand this and that it may be necessary to change a little or a lot about the tour if conditions change.
- Leader(s) need to check and monitor local conditions, especially with regard to fire and weather, at night and in the morning and decide if the ride needs to be altered in any way.
- Rider fatigue can lead to unenjoyable riding and accidents and needs to be prevented by: maintaining a sensible pace, *taking rest breaks based on how the slower riders are going*, ensuring riders eat and drink during rest breaks, constant monitoring how all riders are going
- Use of the back up vehicle as a sag wagon should *always* be an option for riders who are struggling or who have been shaken by an accident, even if they have minor injuries or none at all.

### Riding on dirt and gravel

Most rail trails have long sections of dirt and gravel and if necessary a short skills session should be run about riding on dirt and gravel. How to go downhill safely on dirt and gravel is very important to cover, including safe overtaking and passing.

### Mobile phones

We've found reception is pretty good along most rail trails and recommend every rider carries a mobile or rides with someone who does.

## **Having a support vehicle/sag wagon - Carrying bags**

At OYB we don't carry our luggage on our bikes or backs when we tour. Carrying luggage on a bike can be a hassle, makes it harder to ride, needs proper bike luggage racks and bike bags and can spoil the riding experience. We carry our bags in a back up vehicle which shadows the group as it rides.

The back up vehicle can be an ordinary sedan car or wagon but it needs to be able to carry at least two bikes and one or two riders in case of breakdowns, accidents and if someone has had enough riding for the day (sag wagon). It also carries extra water in a 20 or 30L container and other things like pumps, tools and spares.

The vehicle is driven by a non-riding friend or relative or we share the driving between the group.

The group usually shouts the non-riding driver their meals and accommodation for the tour. This is not a lot if the cost is split between 10 or more riders.

We've found that a 12 seater van is a great support vehicle/sag wagon. A normal car license is all that is required. it's easy to drive and has enough room for luggage, people and bikes.

The van is very useful as a shuttle service if all the group can't be accommodated in the one place at night.

If you're a U3A or similar community group your local council may well help pay for the hiring of a 12 seater van for a trip. If you have to hire a van for a few days it's still cheap when everyone shares the cost.

Some riders can be a bit worried about being able to ride for 2, 3 or more days in a row. We assure the person that if they are struggling a bit on the ride then they can always hop in the support vehicle and have a break. They won't cause any problems, they won't hold up the group and there's absolutely no need to be embarrassed about doing this. After all, that's why we have a support vehicle. With this assurance we've had a few riders who decided to do a tour, had a great time and achieved something they thought was beyond them.

## When to go

When we do our group rides we have the luxury of avoiding busy and crowded peak times such as Christmas, weekends, public and school holidays. We run our rides between Monday and Friday.

We tour during late spring, and early autumn when the best cycling weather is to be had and the Australian bush and countryside are most beautiful.

## Food and Accommodation

There is usually pretty good food and accommodation to be found along Victoria's rail trails.

We've stayed in motels, B&B's, holiday houses and cabins and caravans in caravan and camping parks. No one has ever camped but that's an option for those so inclined...

If everyone can stay in the same place it saves a lot of mucking around and hassles. Also everyone can taste the surprising local pinot someone bought from the vineyard the group passed that day,.

Breakfast – DIY Some riders like to bring their own bespoke designer mueslis, ancient grains, exotic fruits etc and buy milk etc along the way.

Motels usually provide breakfast and there are often cafes etc open early enough and close enough to the accommodation.

Sometimes a local general store in a relatively isolated area is willing to open earlier than usual for breakfast if enough notice is given.

Lunch This is usually had in a town on the route.

Once there was not a town at the right spot along the route so we contacted a nearby gourmet café run by a couple tree changers who made up our lunch orders. The back up vehicle collected the lunches and met us at a predetermined spot and the group dined *al fresco* and very well.

Dinner This is usually at a local pub, restaurant, golf club etc. and should be booked .

If the town where we're staying in is big enough some riders like to 'do their own thing' for dinner.

There's the option of doing a BBQ using the facilities at a motel or campground. One time when we stayed at a large and luxurious holiday house a local gourmet café made up a BBQ dinner of gourmet salads, local raw gourmet meats etc and delivered it to the house. We then used the house BBQ and by golly I can tell that a fine old time was had by all.

A lot of rail trails go through areas known for their wine and gourmet food. A bit of googling about an area can come up with a lot of good opportunities to partake of the local fare.

## Getting There and Back

This can be a bit involved and early planning is essential.

Travel to the start of the tour is usually by car, train or the back up vehicle. We try and have at least 2 riders in each car and this means the car must be able to carry at least 2 bikes using bike racks, the boot or roof rack. The van can usually carry upto 4 bikes. So some organization before you leave is also necessary.

At the start of the ride a car shuffle may be necessary eg all the cars and the van drive to the end of the ride. The cars are left there, all the drivers return in the van and the ride starts.

Or maybe a local bike and rider transport service meets us and takes everyone to the other end of the ride followed by the van. Cars are left where they are and collected at the end of the ride.

If travelling by train please have a look at the [Using Public Transport](#).

## Planning rides

1. Decide **when and where you're going to ride**. Consult with group members and get their ideas and preferences. Suggest this be done 2-3 months before the trip.
2. Work out an **itinerary and plan** that includes: getting to the start of the ride, getting home at the end, accommodation, ride route (where you'll start the day and where you'll finish the day), meals, transporting luggage, any specialist bike and rider transport needed at the end or beginning of the ride.
3. Confirm **how many riders will be doing the tour**. We've found making friends, partners, family welcome to come on a ride is usually a good thing to do... subject to certain conditions.
4. Locate and book accommodation. **This is the most important thing to do and best done as early as possible**.
5. Locate and book any local specialist bike and rider transport needed at the end or beginning of the ride. **This is the second most important thing to do.**
6. Re-confirm who'll be going by asking for a deposit. Start a waitlist if necessary.
7. Allocate tasks to riders eg booking restaurants; finding and organizing lunch and breakfast options; first aid; local emergency contacts (police, ambulance, CFA) for the area; organizing the support vehicle and drivers; organizing transport eg A is driving up and will be able to carry 2 people and their bikes
8. At least 2 weeks before the ride starts it's good to have all the transport to and from the ride sorted.
9. At least 2 weeks before the ride it's good to put out advice and information to everyone involved about the ride and how it's being organised. See below for Example of advice and information sent out.

## ***Example of advice and information sent out***

This was:

- sent to everyone, about the ride and how it's being organised
- sent out at least 2 weeks before the ride

This advice was for a ride from Wangaratta to Bright along the Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail several years ago. *Note any/all details may be out of date.*

## **1 Looking after ourselves and each other**

### **Riding as a group**

We will ride together as a group.

This is so we can look after each other, stay in touch, not get separated and not get lost.

We'll appoint someone as 'point' who will be at the front and you can't pass this person – they won't be the fastest rider.

We'll have a 'sweep' or 'tail end charlie'. They'll be the last person in the group and you can't ride behind them.

As the leader I'll make decisions about navigation, the route, stops, rest breaks, etc. ... in consultation of course.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Aid**

I'll be bringing a first aid kit with help from Jan.

In the event of someone needing 1<sup>st</sup> aid, Debbie is a qualified nurse, Terry is a qualified 1<sup>st</sup> aider and Ross is wilderness 1<sup>st</sup> aid qualified.

### **Emergencies**

The trail is not isolated and in the event someone needs medical attention there is generally ready vehicle access to the Trail.

We'll have mobile phones and will be able to call for help if required.

In the event of a bushfire, other emergency, personal injury etc we'll do whatever is necessary to ensure everyone's safety and well being. This could mean altering our itinerary or ending the trip.

Wangaratta Police – Handley St, Wangaratta 5723 0888

Bright Police - 7 Park St, Bright 5755 1444

Wangaratta Hospital 35-47 Green St, Wangaratta 5722 5111

Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) on **1800 240 667** for bushfire information and advice.

Emergencies dial Triple 000

Wangaratta CFA 5721 4122

### **Personal health matters**

If you have any medical conditions that may be an issue during the ride please contact me, in confidence, to discuss further so we can ensure they are responded to properly should they arise. If you have any allergies, asthma etc that could require the use of an epipen, inhaler, puffer etc it's important we know about these, where they are and how to use them.

### Safe riding

We're all adults and experienced bike riders and know how to ride safely. In the event of hazards and other problems on the trail we will modify our riding/itinerary accordingly. A lot of the trail is gravel surface and we'll have a bit of instruction in riding these surfaces for those wanting it.

### SunSmart

We'll be outside so SunSmart is the way to go.

### Drinking on the ride

Drinking will be important so you'll need to be able to carry at least 1.5 litres of water with you on the bike. This is two of those bike drink bottles.

### Snacks and eats

Please bring some snacks/nibbles for when we're riding. Snacks are good – they stop you getting 'the sags' or 'the dreaded bonk' (aka low blood sugar) , keep your energy up and make for an enjoyable ride.

Bring whatever turns you on: fresh fruit, dried fruit, nuts, scroggin, lollies, chocolate, energy bars, Mars bars etc etc. Stuff that can be shared around is also good eg jelly beans, snakes, quails eggs, larks' tongues in aspic...

### Clothing:

Always wear a **helmet** when you're riding

Good to have clothing that will give **sun protection** &/or use plenty of **sunscreen** which should be applied 30" before exposure to the sun.

**Close toed shoes** (runners, bike shoes etc) are the best – please, no open toed shoes, sandals, thongs etc

**Cycling gloves** protect the hands during falls, keep the sun off the backs of your hands and are good for wiping away sweat.

**Sunglasses** are good. They also keep insects etc out of your eyes and prevent your eyes watering and drying out.

### Bike repairs

I'll be bringing my bike tool kit. Things like punctures and other simple problems we can usually fix on the trail.

In the case of problems we can't fix we'll use the van to transport you and your bike to the nearest bike shop.

Please bring at least one spare tube for your bike.

### Your bike

It'll be good if your bike is in good order. This will mean less chance of annoying breakdowns and less chance of an accident due to bike failure. If you're not sure about the condition of your bike have someone who knows about these things have a look at it or consider having a basic service done at a bike shop a week or two before the ride.

## 2 What to have with you while you're riding

Spare tube

Sunscreen

Sunglasses

At least 2 water bottles (1.5 litres total)

Enough snacks and eats– see above

Mobile if you have one

Personal medications eg inhalers, puffers, epipens etc

Light rain jacket or slicker , depending on forecast

Helmet

Toilet paper – there are few toilets along the route so be prepared to go off into the bush

Small packet of alcohol wipes or similar – good for cleaning hands, face etc

Wallet with cash

We'll carry a 20 litre water container in the van.

### 3 Who's going?

List of names

### 4 Program for the 4 days

#### Monday 16th

Details of who is driving up with whom and who is going by train.

Cars left in Wangaratta.

12:45 We all rendezvous at Apex Park. There are toilets at Apex Park

12:45 – 1:30 Lunch etc

1:30 Group starts ride at 1:30.

~4:30 Arrive Everton (Apex Park to Everton is 28km)

#### Tuesday 17th

- Everyone will need to be packed and ready to ride by **10am**
- Ride Everton to Myrtleford ~25km
- Stay at Myrtleford Tuesday night
- We will need to carry our own snacks as there are no cafes on the route. If it is hot, we will need plenty of water.
- Gapsted Winery has a restaurant and is ~19km past Everton

#### Wednesday 18th

- Everyone will need to be packed and ready to ride by **10am**
- Myrtleford to Bright 30km
- Happy Valley Hotel at Ovens, 5km after Myrtleford
- Porepunkah, plenty of shops etc, 25km past Myrtleford
- Stay in Bright

#### Thursday 19th

- Everyone will need to be packed and ready to head back to Wang by 9:30
- Leisurely breakfast, see some sights etc

- Shuttle bus back to Wang.
- Pick up cars or head to station
- Return to Melbourne.

**Luggage:** Please be thoughtful, not Spartan, about how much we take. This is because we may have limited room in the van that will be transporting our luggage each day and less luggage is easier to handle.

Please put a name tag on your luggage

## 5 Getting there and back again

### From Bright back to Wang. on Thursday 19th

I've booked our bike and rider transport from Bright to Wang for Thursday 19th November  
We'll be driving off at 10am so we'll need to be ready to load up by 9:30.

**High Country Bike Adventures** will take 8 of us

[stephencollins806@gmail.com](mailto:stephencollins806@gmail.com) 0417 384 664

<http://www.greattrailsvictoria.com.au/tour/high-country-bike-adventures-package-tours>

Steve Collins

**Bus a Bike Myrtleford** will take 12 of us

5752 2974, 0409806458 , Geoff and Alannah,

Will contact a week before to confirm

Cost is about \$25 each and we'll pay in cash on 19<sup>th</sup>

ETA at Wang is ~ 11:15

## 6 Accommodation

Penny has organised the accommodation.

**Everton** in cabins at the Caravan Park. <http://turu.com.au/parks/vic/high-country/everton-caravan-and-tourist-park.aspx> Sheets, blankets etc provided. BYO towel or they can provide one.

**Myrtleford** we'll be staying in cabins at:

Myrtleford Holiday Park - Sites are spacious and shaded by large trees in summer, one of the natural beauties of Myrtleford.

The park is located next to the local solar heated swimming pool, grass tennis courts and bowling club and is adjacent to the Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail. Access to the town centre is two minutes away via a footbridge over Happy Valley Creek.

<http://www.myrtlefordholidaypark.com.au/>

AND



Arderns Caravan Park is a friendly family park situated in the Ovens Valley, approximately one kilometre from the Myrtleford post office. It is adjacent to the Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail and backs onto Happy Valley Creek.

<http://www.travelvictoria.com.au/myrtleford/ardernscaravanpark/>

**Bright** we'll be staying in the lodge at the Bright Holiday Park. It is central to town, on Morses Creek about 2 blocks from restaurants and pub for dinner.

<https://www.brightholidaypark.com.au/riverlodge/>

Penny has paid the accommodation deposits and will be contacting you directly about reimbursement.

## 7 Meals

### Afternoon tea on Monday.

At the Everton General Store 57270255 Opens at 6:30 closes at 7 on Monday. We'll need to give notice.

**Dinner on Monday** will be at the Everton Pub. Does not normally serve food on Monday and Tuesday night, but will do so if we ring in advance and book. Penny is liaising with the pub 5727 0232

**Breakfast on Tuesday** BYO or Everton general store, opens at 6:30 . The cabins at Everton have kitchens

General Store has a coffee machine. Sells take away fish and chips and burgers, egg and bacon rolls for breakfast

Would like advance notice if going en masse to get coffee, afternoon tea, dinner or breakfast so that they can put on extra help.

### Lunch on Tuesday

#### Options

1. A purchased picnic We could order sandwiches and cheese platters from Milawa Cheese Factory and Bakery (5727 3589). Our trusty van driver would need to pick up this from Milawa as it is about 10km from Everton.
2. Wait until we get to Myrtleford – have a good breakfast and have enough snacks for the ride

**Dinner on Tuesday** – Lyn M is looking after this.

**Breakfast on Wednesday** Heiner's Bakery is favourite with locals that would be suitable for breakfast. Or there are a couple of cafes. DIY in your cabin

### Lunch on Wednesday

1. The first possible food/coffee stop is 25km from Myrtleford at the Rail Trail Café. This has a number of good reviews on Trip Adviser. Could be a good place to stop.
2. Wait until we get to Porepunkah or Bright – have a good breakfast and have enough snacks for the ride

**Dinner on Wednesday** – Pam is looking after this.

**Breakfast on Thursday** Could be in any number of places or DIY in the lodge. Beanz of Bright gets great reviews

If you want to have a hot drink along the way you can bring your own thermos, mug, tea coffee, sugar, milk etc.

## 8 Back up vehicle

Peter has kindly offered the use of his 2 seater van.  
Dave (son of one of the riders) will be our road manager.

We'll **keep track of petrol costs for the support vehicle** during the trip and divide the total by everyone on the ride.

## 9 Bike shops along the trail

### **Myrtleford Cycle Centre**

59 Clyde Street  
Myrtleford  
03 5752 1511

### **Cyclepath**

**74 Gavan St, Bright, VIC,3741**  
(03) 5750 1442  
Open 9-5:30

### **Dean Woods Cycles 70.62 km**

3 Tone Rd, Wangaratta, VIC, 3676  
• (03) 57222033

### **West End Cycles 71.39 km**

- 25 Muntz St, Wangaratta, VIC, 3677 57214519