

Autumn Rail Trails Tour

Great Vic and Murray to Mountains Rail Trails Combo Tour

Wednesday 11 April, 2018 to Sunday 15 April, 2018

A typical day on the ride: You wake up to the morning bird calls and are feeling good after yesterday's invigorating ride. Step out onto the balcony to greet the day before heading to meet the rest of the group for a wholesome bike rider's breakfast.

You push off along the rail trail and come across a small town or a clearing in the trees for some morning tea. After a chat and refilling your water bottles you head out again for a good ride, stopping in eventually at one of the small villages dotted along the trail for a cafe lunch with some great choices of local produce, and enough sustenance and energy to take you through into the afternoon. The last leg of the day takes you through more lovely scenery and spectacular cycling while the AllTrails support vehicle is never far away with water refills, bananas, home-baked goodies and advice on the best places to go and the best places to stop.

You will arrive at your overnight accommodation with plenty of time to explore another interesting town, enjoy the afternoon with a cuppa & biscuit, a wine in the garden or a craft beer at the local brewery. Later on we share a few stories at the evening briefing followed by a delicious dinner, then it's off to bed for a well-deserved slumber so that we can do it all again tomorrow.

Location	Distance	Date	B	L	D	A
Tallarook to Cathkin/Alexandra	61 or 76	Wed 11 Apr 2018	--	--	Y	Y
Cathkin/Alexandra to Mansfield	60 or 75	Thu 12 Apr 2018	Y	--	Y	Y
REST DAY Mansfield bus transfer to Bright	NA	Fri 13 Apr 2018	--	--	Y	Y
Bright to Everton/Beechworth	58 or 75	Sat 14 Apr 2018	Y	--	Y	Y
Beechworth to Wangaratta	43 km	Sun 15 Apr 2018	Y	--	--	--
Total distance cycled	222km		3	0	4	4
Average daily distance	56km					

Meal and accom inclusions noted as B, L, D, A (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Accommodation)

Tallarook to Cathkin/Alexandra — 61 or 76 — Wed 11 Apr 2018 — - - D A

Our ride begins in the small country town of Tallarook, an easy 75min drive from Melbourne, or an even easier transfer with AllTrails (this can be booked as an optional extra). At Tallarook we collect the last luggage, set bikes up, run through a safety and welcome briefing then get you on your way through the backroads of town before hitting the trail.

It is a beautiful part of the trail to begin the ride as you follow alongside the Goulburn River as it flows past massive old gum trees on your left as the trail cuts a flat, yet bending path through the landscape. Often the trail sits high above the surrounding farms and cuts straight through the tops of hills. You may want to stop for lunch or tea at the historic old School House Tearoom that displays work from local artists, including their renowned hand-made jumpers. While enjoying your scones with home-made jam under the shade of the garden trees you might ponder upon what the hundreds of men who toiled away for many seasons over 130 years ago might be thinking about the beautiful 'cycle path' that they created. Onwards, you pass by a few smaller villages before hitting the bigger town of Yea where our crew will be waiting to meet you, refill water bottles and give out any advice (or bananas) required. You may want to stop in at the Peppercorn Hotel for a drink, featured on Channel Nine's TV show 'Postcards', before starting the up-hill climb out of town towards and through the famous and historic Cheviot Tunnel. The tunnel is 200 metres long, built between 1887-1889 from over 600,000 handmade bricks. It's still in great condition and a real highlight of the ride. Out of the tunnel it's a downhill run to the small hamlet of Molesworth which doesn't have a big town centre but does have a noteworthy coffee shop that does 'real coffee' which our tour leader will guide you to. From here the trail leads you through the Goulburn River flood plains and many historic bridges that afford great views – it is also the best area to spot koalas.

After crossing the Goulburn River on the dedicated cyclist bridge, it's not far to Cathkin where the AllTrails bus will be ready to transport cyclists and bikes through to our overnight location of Alexandra (for anyone who is keen to keep the legs pumping, it's an extra 15km ride to Alexandra). After collecting your luggage from our bus and checking in to your room you can have a swim in the pool or explore the township of Alexandra. The town began as a mining camp when gold was discovered in 1866 and is now a beautiful town with wide tree-lined streets, historic colonial buildings, pottery and glassware gift shops and galleries. Tonight we gather together for a fun briefing of the day's events, what to look out for tomorrow, and a pre-arranged group meal.

Cathkin/Alexandra to Mansfield — 60 or 75 — Thu 12 Apr 2018 — B - D A

This morning after breakfast you can leave your luggage with us and decide whether you will ride the 15km back to the main trail at Cathkin, or get a ride in the support bus. From Cathkin you will have a long, gradual uphill gradient for about 20km. It's not extreme but it's a great work-out and will make the downhill run to the historic Merton Railway Station all the more enjoyable on the other side. Past Merton it's not long before you run into Lake Eildon and a bit further on, hit the town of Bonnie Doon made famous in the movie 'The Castle'. It would be remiss not to take a big breath of the fresh air while looking over the lake and..."ahhh, the serenity". The town is well known these days as a holiday and weekend destination for bushwalkers, trail bike riders, off-road 4WD enthusiasts and fishermen and you may want to stop in the town centre for a gourmet wood-fired pizza at the 'Bonnie Bar' and refill the drink bottles – our leader will have other suggestions for eat-in or picnic takeaway food as well.

Having travelled through the township, the trail passes over the Bonnie Doon Bridge which is 385 metres long and provides a great vantage spot to stop and watch the activity on the lake. The last 20km will take you through a deep natural stone cutting to Maindample where those in need of a refreshment can enjoy the country hospitality of the Maindample Whistle Stop, located right on the trail. If you are on a roll, you can head straight through towards Mansfield with clear views of Mt Buller, Mt Stirling and Timbertop as you near the town, where we will have your luggage ready for collection and keys will be ready for your room in the only 4 star motel in town. Known as an adventure sports haven, Mansfield is a great place for us to celebrate the first half of your cycling trip with a great dinner which we will pre-arrange for you, a few drinks and some wonderful memories.

REST DAY Mansfield bus transfer to Bright — NA — Fri 13 Apr 2018 — - - D A

This morning you can have a little sleep-in, or get up early and find an early morning café for breakfast. Our tour leader will give you the low-down on breakfast options in town. Today is an official lay-day where we will transport you all to the High Country township of Bright. Renowned for its beauty in every season and particularly in autumn with the natural beauty of the European trees changing colour before winter, Bright will charm you and inspire you not just from a holiday-makers perspective but also from the perspective of a cyclist. Bright is considered a cycling mecca and Victoria's premier cycling destination. The surrounding area has many famous climbs for the avid road cyclist and multiple mountain bike tracks. You will feel the bicycle culture all around town as cycle-friendly businesses abound. If you need any bike adjustments or repairs just let our staff know and we can look over it for you. After exploring today we will meet again this evening for a pre-arranged group dinner and briefing at our unique European-chalet style accommodation.

Bright to Everton/Beechworth — 58 or 75 — Sat 14 Apr 2018 — B - D A

There is plenty to look forward to as you head out along this beautifully paved cycle path, crossing the bridge over the Ovens River and starting on this first 30km section to Myrtleford - a gentle downhill all the way. Passing by the retired saw mill town of Porepunkah, it's easy riding with Mt Buffalo National Park on the left and the trail meandering alongside the Ovens River past vineyards, hops producers and orchards. Feathertop Winery is a popular stop for cyclists on the trail - a cycle friendly business with bike racks, free water refills and bike pumps available. It may be too early for a wine (or not), but try the coffee and morning tea which is best enjoyed in the magical setting out on the lawn overlooking the vineyards. You will notice the iconic silhouettes of the region's tobacco kilns along this section of the trail which are an interesting piece of High Country history and provide some great photo opportunities. Myrtleford has plenty of nice cafes, bakeries and restaurants and we will give cyclists recommendations for places to stop or where to pick up some food for a picnic lunch. After Myrtleford there are a few gentle ups and downs in the terrain, passing by Gapstead Winery and heading for Everton.

Everton itself is a short detour off the trail and cyclists are welcome to finish here, put their bike in the bus and enjoy one of the 'world famous' Everton Milkshakes. You'll no doubt also cross the road to take a few pics of the at-least-as-famous Everton Bus Shelter. For those looking for a challenge, ride the extra 17km uphill to Beechworth. It's worth the effort if you have the inclination to do so. Either way, we all end up at Beechworth, with restaurants, cafes, shopping, an award winning brewery, boutique wineries and of course the original Beechworth Bakery (a must). Said to be Australia's best-preserved gold mining town, the town centre at sun-down sends you to a different era as the golden sun lights up the gold-rush town like the set of a Hollywood Western. Our accom is central and also the location of a famous Ned Kelly fight and other Kelly Gang history. Tonight we enjoy another group dinner as we celebrate our final evening on tour.

Beechworth to Wangaratta — 43 km — Sun 15 Apr 2018 — B - - -

Although some cyclists may have decided against riding *up* to Beechworth yesterday, everyone will want to enjoy the 17km *downhill* this morning. It's not steep enough to feel out of control, but plenty steep enough to get the wind in your hair and forget about pedalling for a while. With no hairpin turns or sharp corners to contend with, just sit back and enjoy it. The sights, sounds and smells of classic Australian bush, steep cuttings and heritage brick bridges makes this section a beautiful experience. Once back to the main trail you will head west for the last section of the ride through to Wangaratta where the ride will finish in Apex Park. Here we will meet up and help pack away your bikes ready to head home. We will have recommendations for lunch before we head for Melbourne (or Tallarook if you left your car there). Congratulations!

