

## October Odyssey 2015

We've just returned from a wonderful bike riding holiday, brilliantly organised by David and Marilyn Partington in the Bright and Myrtleford area of Victoria. We had three days based in Bright and then we moved to Myrtleford for a further four days of riding.



**Ride 1** David led the group up the gentle gradient of the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail and we meandered towards the now retired saw mill town of Porepunkah with views of the magnificent Mount Buffalo. A bolt dropped out of Helen's carrier rack but she was soon on the road after a quick repair job by Bruno. Our morning tea stop was at the very popular Rail Trail Café, packed with like-minded cyclists. We followed the road up the Buckland Valley, where significant gold deposits were discovered in the 1850's and lunched at a lovely picnic spot in a forest setting next to the Buckland River. Returning through Porepunkah we stopped to admire a delightful garden, ablaze with a veritable bouquet of colour from multiple azaleas and rhododendrons. Back to Bright where the day ended with happy hour and a BBQ in the caravan park camp kitchen.





**Ride 2** Leaving Bright we took the Back Germantown Road, crossing the Ovens River through a shallow water ford. Some riders waded across, others rode and a few carried their bikes across a large fallen log. Guess what? No one fell in! The group then split into two, with Eric leading a ride up the steep climb to Tawonga Gap. The cyclists were challenged by the climb but rewarded with views across the Kiewa Valley. David led the other riders back to Bright and out to the town of Wandiligong, the site of a small gold rush during the mid-1850s. "The Diggings" was the site of extensive mining and has walking tracks and several footbridges across the creeks. We admired the Chinese Swing Bridge which is a tribute to the large number of Chinese who lived in the area during its gold rush days. After our return to the caravan park, Caroline and Carmon entertained us at happy hour by playing their ukuleles with style and talent and the group sang along with gusto. Some quite talented singers and others with lots of enthusiasm.



**Ride 3** Following our leader Helen Stephens along roads and paths, we made our way to Harrietville which is located at the foot of Mount Hotham and Mount Feathertop. Azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias, paulownias, dogwoods, wisteria and magnolias provided a burst of colour in the spring. Lunch was in the local park by a branch of the Ovens River. A power outage at the time of our visit resulted in all food outlets being closed, so food sharing ensued. We rode back down the valley to Bright. Tea was in the outdoor eating area of "The Brewery" in Bright with wonderful views over the Ovens River.

**Ride 4** Everyone had moved base to the Ardern's Caravan Park in Myrtleford. The next day David organised a minivan to transport eleven riders to the historic town of Beechworth. Time was spent exploring the town before commencing the undulating ride to Myrtleford via Buckland Gap. Angela encountered a snake on the path and narrowly avoided its tail. Carmon, who was following right behind, unfortunately drove right over the top of the astonished snake. She exhibited fine acrobatic skills in raising her legs above the handlebars to avoid being bitten. So much for a quiet snooze on



the path! Heartbeats returned to normal on the way back. Happy hour that night saw Angela and Carmon presented with a big packet of snakes to remember their spectacular ride.



**Ride 5** John took us riding alongside the Buffalo River Valley, up a few undulations through natural bushland and verdant farmland and some of Australia's most spectacular ranges. We arrived at the man-made Lake Buffalo, nestled right at the foot of the mountains where we lunched in the picnic area with spectacular views of the lake and surrounding mountains. We returned down the winding valley to Myrtleford. Happy cyclists that night dined at the Buffalo Hotel in Myrtleford which served tasty good value meals.



**Ride 6** David led us along the Barwidgee Creek valley to Mudgegonga and then on the gentle climb up Carrols Road. At the Happy Valley Road junction all were happy to have completed the climbing challenge. A speedy traverse down the Happy Valley to the town of Ovens and then onto the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail to Myrtleford. More happy moments at night after the ride.

**Ride 7** saw us following David along the very scenic Murray to Mountains Rail trail to Porepunkah. Morning tea was at the old Eurobin railway station and then we continued along the trail, biking underneath the highway bridge to the Porepunkah picnic reserve beside the Ovens River. Some riders lunched at The Rail Trail Café, eating french toast with berries and maple syrup, date scones with jam and cream and homemade hamburgers followed by steaming coffees. We had a leisurely return ride down the trail to Myrtleford, with an ice cream stop at the Berry Farm. Berry nice! A BBQ that night included the return of the much loved and very popular Ukulele Sisters! More talent was evident that night. Some wish to remain undiscovered.



We certainly enjoyed the interesting and varied programme of rides, the splendid riding weather, the scenic vistas and the fun and laughter of the BBQ's and happy hours and the delightful company of our fellow bike riders. Thank you David and Marilyn for your splendid efforts in organising these rides and thanks to all the participants for a wonderful holiday.

Allison Cornish