

2023 Canberra Tour Report

October 30th to November 6th.



Canberra is a brilliant venue for any cycling based activity with a comprehensive network of paved tracks connecting the city to the suburbs, lots of fire track/single track options outside of the residential areas and dedicated MTB parks either in the suburbs or on the outskirts of the city.

22 club members joined us on our Canberra adventure, some straight from a multi day tour based in Myrtleford! The tour was open to all members with the participants being responsible for their own transport and accommodation.

What follows is the tour leaders (biased?) report of the tour highlights and lowlights. There has been little negative feedback to date and some indication that people enjoyed at least a few of the rides on offer.

Accommodation:

The rides were designed to start mostly from the Alivio Tourist Park where the majority of participants stayed. This is the perfect place to stay if you are on a cycling holiday in Canberra as not only does it offer a pool, restaurant, BBQs and a bike clean/tool station but it is located only 5 kilometres from Canberra Centre right next door to the Bruce Ridge MTB park!

Weather:

Canberra's weather for our stay was perfect. Temperatures in the low to mid 20s with a very slight drizzle on one day and a couple of cloudy days with no strong winds to battle into. Great conditions for enjoyable cycling.

Rides:

We had a diverse group of riders along for the tour with differing equipment, capabilities and tastes so we decided to offer a choice of two rides each day.

There would be a longer, hilly, challenging ride for those (masochists?) who enjoy the pain and a shorter, flatter more leisurely ride with plenty of opportunity to stop and smell the roses.

It was hoped that numbers on each of the rides would be somewhat balanced which worked for the most part except the first day when we all did the same Arboretum and Stromlo ride!

All rides were available from the club's RWGPS page. We had a few issues with voice guidance being slow or incorrect coupled with glare on handlebar mounted phone screens that occasionally made navigation difficult.

Two rides that stood out for me are...

Best ride – Cotter Dam

This was the shortest ride. A lot of steep climbing straight from the start but after that more gentle altitude gains. After deliberating at length over a "Road Closed" sign we determined that the intention was to keep vehicles off the track to discourage camping and the associated risk to the drinking water catchment and as such we should continue. Subsequent signage vindicated that decision!

We were rewarded with stunning views over the Cotter River from high up and then a fast winding downhill to the river itself. The water was over knee deep so, minus shoes and socks, we wheeled through and carried the ebikes across.

Met a couple of local fishermen at the crossing who seemed to have made the same decision about the road closure sign as we had.

Lunch with the kangaroos and then enjoyed views from above the dam before another fast, winding gravel downhill to join the bitumen of Brindabella Road.

The final descent on bitumen back to the start was a brake burning blast.



Cotter River view

Most challenging ride – CCT North

One of my aims was to complete the Canberra Centenary Trail. I broke this into two 70+ km rides, one for the North section and one for the South. Fortunately a few brave souls accompanied me in my folly.

The North ride was much harder than the South! A larger altitude gain with challenging single track surfaces made for a tiring ride but we were privileged to see some spectacular views over the Canberra suburbs, looked down on a large mob of kangaroos on the move and had lunch at a shelter only accessible by bike or on foot.



Lunch on the CCT North.

Overall a successful tour that only just scratched the surface of the rides available in Canberra. It would be well worth another visit.

What worked well:

Two rides per day one longer and more challenging, one shorter and more relaxed.
Participants flexibility when rides were rescheduled, changed or rerun!

What did not work well:

Away rides. People seem to prefer riding from their accommodation if possible.

RWGPS issues unresolved as yet.

Final tour meal. By the time we worked out that the park restaurant was not open on the last day of the tour (Sunday) it was too late to book anything else. We ended up having a BBQ in the camp kitchen which meant that no-one had to drive but a restaurant/hotel meal would have been better!

Thanks to all who came along to be part of the Canberra tour and especially those who led rides, suggested changes and helped out with navigation when needed.

Kevin Dronfield