

MULGA BICYCLE TOURS



Cullinga Road, Cootamundra, New South Wales

As a supplier of recreational services we have a legal duty of care to inform you of the risks involved in taking part in your cycling holiday. The purpose of the following is to alert you to the risks that we have identified, all of which can be avoided with reasonable care. Please take time to read it all. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to call us.

FOR ALL OF US WHO ENJOY CYCLING, the most important step to our safety is to acknowledge that a cyclist is a vulnerable road user and as such cycling on the road involves a significant risk of physical or psychological injury, permanent disability and/or even death. We also need to remember that such harm may result from either our own actions or the actions and/or omissions of others.

WE CANNOT STRESS ENOUGH the importance of always remaining aware of what is taking place around you, of where you are and whether anyone or anything is a threat to your health and well-being. We refer to this as Situational Awareness and we use this process to manage our safety on the road.

The highest cause of injury and death of cyclists on the road is being hit from behind. This is one of the reasons we require you to use flashing lights on your bikes and to wear bright or high visibility clothing so you can easily be seen by other road users. It is why we require you to carry UHF radios so the front and rear support vehicles can try to inform you about any significant traffic heading towards you that may require you to stop and let it pass. At times the topography may not permit you to receive our radio message so it is always important to listen and to use your mirrors, if you have them, and to stay alert for anything that may be approaching you. **ALWAYS GIVE WAY TO SOMETHING THAT IS BIGGER THAN YOU.**

In the same way we try to let you know what is coming we also try to let the other road users know you are on the road.

We will park a vehicle in front of you and another behind you with amber flashing lights and "Cyclist Ahead" signs. When a heavy vehicle or caravan passes the rear vehicle we will first try to inform you that it is on its way and then we will try and contact the heavy vehicle or caravan to let them know how many cyclists are on the road and where they may expect to find you.

ONE HAZARDOUS RIDING PRACTICE we sometimes observe is riders moving towards the centre of the lane when they look over their right shoulder to see what is following. We become concerned with this practice when a vehicle is travelling close behind and the vehicle has to move into the oncoming lane to avoid the rider. When we raise this with our guests many are unaware they are doing it.

IT IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO KEEP MONITORING what is following you but if you turn your head further than you need to look over your shoulder, your shoulder will start to move and this causes your arm to move, steering the bike into the centre of the road.

When looking over your shoulder it is important to stay relaxed and keep your arms and shoulders straight as this helps you ride in a straight line. To look over your shoulder simply touch your chin on your shoulder and do not go any further. **Just glance – little and often is best** - you should not need to look for a long time to see what is behind you.

***Situational Awareness ... is looking,
listening and always being aware of
what is going on around you ...***



East Tallagandra Lane, Sutton, New South Wales

We have all heard the negative comments about cyclists using the roads, so to help promote cycling in a positive manner and to reduce our impact on other road users we ask that when safe to do so, you stop to let motorists queued behind you pass. This minimises the chances of an impatient driver forcing their way past you which has the potential to cause an accident.

ROAD RELATED HAZARDS

IN RECENT TIMES we have witnessed a significant deterioration in the condition of the road network in eastern and southern Australia. The unusually high rainfall has resulted in the deterioration of many road surfaces with the creation of large numbers of potholes and in some places the complete removal of the sealed surface over large patches of the road.

Please take caution when navigating these hazards particularly when descending and most importantly, when there is traffic close behind you. Potholes and rough patches can easily be hidden in the shadows and if the road is wet, potholes can become nearly invisible if they fill up with water

making it impossible to determine how deep they are.

Due to the quickly changing conditions of the road we ask that you do not draft each other during the tour as it would not take much to spoil your time away if one of the group was to hit another while attempting to avoid a hazard. Also, any incident that leads to a cyclist lying prone on the road will almost certainly be fatal if the cyclist is hit by a closely following vehicle.

Please also be aware of oncoming traffic moving into your lane to avoid potholes on their side of the road. If you find yourself on a bad patch of road with traffic coming from either direction please take the conservative approach and stop to let the traffic pass.

A side effect of the damaged roads is an increased risk of being hit by stones thrown up by vehicles passing in either direction. Please wear eye protection at all times whilst riding and please let us know if you receive a stone related injury that may require treatment.

In many areas there is a drop off at the tar/gravel interface at the edge of the road. When stopping for a break please take particular care as you leave the tarred surface and take

equal care when returning to the road so that you do not fall off.

When stopped on the side of the road for a break please do so where there are good lines of sight in both directions so you can see and you can easily be seen by other road users. As a guide we recommend you and your bike should be a minimum of 1.5 metres to the left of the edge line so that you cannot be hit by passing traffic. If stopping with a support vehicle please stop in front of the vehicle so that the vehicle offers you protection from the following traffic.

Some roads incorporate a rumble strip into the white edge line to provide an audible warning to motorists if they wander too far left. These rumble strips can create a hazard to cyclists particularly if you cross the rumble/edge line at speed. Like all white road markings the edge line can also become very slippery in the wet that when crossed may cause you to fall off. Please take care in these situations.

BRIDGES AND CULVERTS. There is the potential for following traffic to try to overtake you on narrow bridges which may cause an accident. Please pull over and only cross bridges when all the following and oncoming traffic has cleared the bridge.



Wollondilly River, Range Road, Goulburn, New South Wales

In some locations, bridges and culverts may not have safety railings which also makes it possible for you to unintentionally be forced off the edge of the road.

OLD WOODEN BRIDGES with decking planks running in the direction of travel are still in use on our roads although they are becoming rarer. If you come across one of these bridges take care that your wheels do not get caught in the cracks between the planks. As well as causing you a potential injury these types of accidents can irreparably damage a wheel putting an end to your tour. Steel drainage grates in gutters can create a similar hazard.

Some roads have a concrete spoon drain immediately adjacent to the sealed shoulder. Please avoid the temptation to ride in these spoon drains as the build-up of algae can make them very slippery and if you fall off you are likely to fall into the traffic lane and potentially be hit by following traffic.

COUNTRY DRIVEWAYS. Where a gravel driveway joins a sealed road there is the potential for gravel from the driveway to be swept onto the tar by vehicles entering and exiting the driveway. This build-up of gravel creates a hazard to cyclists passing the driveway. Please ensure there is no traffic following when you pull out to avoid the gravel build-up. If there is traffic following do not try to ride through the gravel as this may result in you falling off into the path of the following vehicle.

CATTLE GRIDS, railway and tram lines. Please be careful crossing these hazards and take particular care in the wet. Always cross cattle grids, railway and tram lines at right angles. If you do not wish to ride or walk over a grid please wait for the support vehicle.

To avoid oncoming traffic always keep left on crests and curves.

CLEATS. Many of us ride with cleated shoes and pedals but they can become a hazard if they are not regularly maintained. Sand and mud can easily jam the jaws of the clips on the pedals making it hard for you to clip in or more importantly clip out, if you need to stop unexpectedly. In the past we have had riders roll up to the front support vehicle to find themselves in the embarrassing situation of falling off in front of the tour group as they have been unable to unclip. On occasions this resulted in injuries that took them out of the tour. So it is particularly important that you keep the cleats on your shoes and the pedal clips clean and lubricated. Throughout the tour please monitor the tension of the pedal clip to ensure it is always at the correct tension to enable you to easily clip in and unclip. This applies equally to both sealed and unsealed road surfaces but when it is wet and muddy extra diligence is required as it is very easy for everything to clog up.



Mulcahys Road, Arcadia Valley, Queensland

Photos: Mark Arundel unless specified otherwise

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PO Box 775 / Mitchell ACT 2911 / Australia / 04 1230 9711 / hello@mulgatours.com.au / mulgabicycletours.com.au

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Breadalbane Road, Breadalbane, New South Wales

UNSEALED SURFACES

SOME OF OUR TOUR ROUTES use unsealed or gravel roads as this is the only way we can access some of the impressive points of interest along our route.

At times the unsealed roads we travel on can be smoother than sealed roads, while others are a mixture of everything - smooth surfaces, loose gravel or sand with pot holes and corrugations.

But the common hazard you will find on an unsealed surfaces is the loose surface that has the potential to move under your wheels and quickly unseat you.

Never travel at a speed faster than you are comfortable with and do not feel pressure to keep up with others in the group. If we are using a gravel road we will have factored a slower speed into the itinerary so feel free to take it easy. If you are unsure about riding on a gravel road or trail do not hesitate to walk that particular section or ask for a lift in the bus. It is far better to take a short ride in the bus than fall off and injure yourself and then miss out on the rest of the tour.

Pick the smoothest route along the road by looking ahead rather than concentrating on what is immediately in front of your wheel. This will help you find and stay on the most stable surface and avoid the potholes and gravel or sand.

If you can, avoid the corrugations as it is really hard to control a bouncing bicycle. To make things more hazardous some corrugated sections may even have patches of deep sand in between that can quickly grab and wipe out your front wheel from underneath you.

When on a loose surface always slow yourself by feathering your rear brake and avoid using the front brake otherwise you may find yourself sitting on the ground.

Passing vehicles may create dust clouds and sometimes the dust may be very thick. If you cannot see through the dust, stop and wait for the dust to clear as other traffic will also not be able to see you. Keep left as much as possible particularly on the crests and curves to avoid oncoming traffic.

When travelling on gravel roads it goes without saying that our objective is to remain upright as no one wants to take home a gravel rash as a souvenir from their cycling holiday!

SHARED PATHS

SHARED PATHS OFFER A RELAXED riding environment to the roads but they still have hazards that need to be avoided.

Please remember that a shared path is a low speed environment being shared with a variety of different users such as pedestrians, dogs, skateboards, roller blades and other cyclists.

The most significant risk is created by the fact many of the users, particularly young children and animals, can be unpredictable in their movements.

As a cyclist feels vulnerable next to a large truck pedestrians can feel vulnerable around bicycles so slow down to no more than 10 kph, signal your presence by voice or with a bell and pass all pedestrians with a minimum of 1 metre of space. It is never acceptable to provide a close passing experience.

Another hazard is the pedestrian using ear buds or headphones and playing music or podcasts as they are very unlikely to hear you coming or even calling out a warning that you are passing, let alone hear your bell.

Travel at a safe speed so you can stop easily, as you are required by law to give way to all pedestrians on the shared path.

If you wish to stop, pull off the path to the left so you are not creating a hazard to other users. Most importantly, be courteous and avoid conflicts with other users of the shared path.



Gulf Development Road, Blackbull, Queensland

HEAVY VEHICLES

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND the role of aerodynamic forces in minimising the potential for sideswipes from a heavy vehicle. As a heavy vehicle moves along the road it creates an invisible aerodynamic bow wave and when traffic speeds exceed 60kph this bow wave can impose side forces on a cyclist as the vehicle passes. These side forces can result in the cyclist being side swiped and knocked off even though there has been no physical contact.

As a heavy vehicle begins to pass a bicycle the cyclist will feel an initial push from the bow wave before being pulled back into the wake of the wave as the vehicle begins to pass. The effect the cyclist feels will be proportional to the size of the heavy vehicle, its speed and its distance from the bicycle. [The estimated safe tolerance level for a cyclist being passed by a heavy vehicle travelling at 100kph is a separation distance of 2 metres](#), which is greater than the legislated 1.5 m safe passing distance! Think about that for a moment!

The width of a regional road lane varies between 3.0 and 3.5 metres wide therefore if the heavy vehicle is travelling at 100kph and it is unable to pass you by passing into the

oncoming lane we ask that you stop to let it pass.

These aerodynamic forces can be notably increased when cross winds are present and is why we will cancel riding as soon as we observe side winds move a cyclist without the influence of passing traffic.

Another heavy vehicle hazard you should be aware of is when the road has a left-hand curve in your direction of travel. In these instances there is often a tendency for the heavy vehicle to unintentionally 'cut the corner' and encroach into the left-hand shoulder where you may be riding. Other articulated vehicles such as cars towing boats and caravans may also do this.

Similarly, heavy vehicles and caravans overtaking cyclists sometimes unintentionally merge back into the left lane earlier than they should. Please remain alert to these and similar circumstances and stop and let the traffic pass if you have any concerns for your safety.

Driving heavy vehicles on regional roads is not an easy task as their extra mass, width and reduced stopping capability limit their ability to avoid a crash.

[Bicycle NSW provides this example:](#)

"A fully loaded SUEZ collection truck carries the same momentum at 5km/h as a family Toyota Camry travelling at over 67km/h. For this reason it's important to maintain a safe stopping distance and to appreciate how the truck reacts."

We ask that when space is limited you help the drivers of these heavy vehicles by stopping well in advance to let them pass. It is very important you provide the driver of the heavy vehicle with enough time to appreciate that you are stopping, or have stopped, to provide an extra safety margin, so please do not leave this to the last minute. If you keep rolling slowly on the shoulder of the road you are not providing the driver with the necessary confidence to pass you safely. A hand wave also goes a long way to equal understanding.

Always be aware of and avoid any vehicle's blind spots. Drivers of heavy vehicles have blind spots at the front, sides and rear of their vehicles. You will notice that many large vehicles will have the following warning sign:

*"If you cannot see my mirrors,
I cannot see you!"*

ANIMAL HAZARDS

ROAD KILL is unfortunately a familiar sight on Australia's roads and our tours see the full spectrum from cattle through to small reptiles. But the most common is the kangaroo or wallaby. A sad reality is that some animals will only be injured and if you are too close it may kick out and knock you off your bike so it is important to pass wide of all animals.

Mostly the animals are found on the left edge of the road requiring the cyclist to move into the centre of the lane and sometimes the oncoming lane to pass them. When making this manoeuvre it is important to check there is no traffic following or coming towards you. If there is traffic please stop to let it pass as we do not want the vehicle trying to pass you at the same time you pull out to pass the animal.

SNAKES are active during many of our tours and you may see them crossing the road or come across them after they have been hit by passing traffic. Some can be quite long, with one we saw nearly as long as the width of the traffic lane. They can also move very fast.

Treat all snakes as venomous and do not assume a snake that has been hit by traffic is going to be dead, as sometimes they are not! Therefore, do not stop next to them for a good look as you may find yourself retreating from a very angry snake.

Suddenly discovering a snake can be an alarming experience but it can equally be very interesting. If you come across a snake whilst off the bike or during a comfort stop, stay calm, slowly walk or back away and then maintain a safe distance so the snake does not feel threatened. Under no circumstances should you approach the snake or try to kill the snake.

If a snake is crossing the road please maintain a safe distance as it is not uncommon for oncoming traffic to scare the snake into changing direction and it may head directly towards you.

STOCK AND WILDLIFE. Sometimes we will be riding on unfenced roads which means you may encounter wildlife or stock grazing beside the road. Most stock we come across may never have seen a bicycle and because a bicycle is mostly silent it is possible to unintentionally startle the animals. Rather than ringing a bell which may unsettle them, our preferred approach is to talk in a medium voice and you will generally find they will move slowly away. If you are unsure about passing by yourself wait for the rear support vehicle to escort you past.

Occasionally we come across mobs of cattle or sheep being moved under the control of drovers with working dogs. These are usually very

interesting experiences. Under these circumstances it is important to follow the directions given by the person controlling the animals. Do not try to push through the mob, wait patiently and watch and admire how the dogs or workers control the stock. Move on when it is clearly safe to do so.

SWOOPING MAGPIES. These are a seasonal hazard associated with spring but the timing is going to vary in different parts of Australia. Unfortunately, we will not know where they are until they swoop in to ask you to "GO AWAY!!!" Please remain calm, maintain your awareness of any following traffic and ride straight ahead at a steady pace. If you are not confident riding while being swooped then the safest approach is to dismount and walk until the bird leaves you alone. Ordinarily a magpie's territory is very small so you may not need to walk that far.

Other birds that display swooping behaviour are the Crow, Magpie-larks, Noisy Miner, Grey Butcherbird and Masked Lapwing (Plover) although any nesting bird may swoop people if you get too close to their nest. Masked Lapwings nest on the ground and it is not uncommon for us to come across a nest very close to the edge line of the road.



Forde, Australian Capital Territory



Leo Cummings Monument Lookout, Kiana, Eyre Peninsula, South Australia

UNFENCED CLIFFS

OUR DIFFERENT TOURS VISIT a number of lookouts, waterfalls and on some occasions UNFENCED coastal cliff locations where cliff erosion is a continuing natural process. Each year we visit the sea cliffs we see fresh signs of cliff collapse caused by the undercutting wave action at the base of the cliff.

Cliffs in particular can be very unstable and in many places the edge of the cliff is not readily seen. Cliff collapses are unpredictable events, occurring without warning, and can cause serious injury or death.

Please use common sense near all cliff areas and keep yourself well back from the cliff edge and do not walk under the cliff. Where access is possible to the base of a cliff keep to the tracks. The general published advice is to always stay more than the height of the cliff away from the base of the cliff. That means if the cliff is 50 metres high, don't go closer than 50 metres from its base.

Always remain behind any safety barriers that have been erected by the land managers to keep you safe.

When walking close to the sea edge please remember that rocks can be slippery when wet.

To prevent being swept off your feet by a freak wave whilst on the beach or rocks never turn your back to the ocean.

THE COVID-19 VIRUS

EVEN THOUGH COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted in Australia the COVID-19 virus still remains the most likely hazard to disrupt our tour.

Our [COVID Safe Protocols](#) have been implemented with two very important goals in mind:

- To avoid cancelling the tour, if during the tour, staff test positive or exhibit symptoms consistent with the COVID-19 virus; and
- To avoid the costly evacuation of guests, at their expense, if guests test positive or exhibit symptoms consistent with the COVID-19 virus during the tour.

Our risk analysis shows that even with our control measures in place the most likely locations we will be exposed to the COVID-19 virus is at the restaurants or cafes we need to use to provide our meals.

With the above front of mind we have embraced a COVID-19 transmission prevention strategy which prioritises "safe" indoor air.

We are doing this by eating at venues that offer the option for outdoor dining and booking accommodation that has independent air conditioning and outside entry for all our rooms, so we are not required to share ventilation, corridors or lifts with others.

We are also asking everyone to test before meeting the tour group and to practice COVID Safe behaviours: physically distance; always wear a mask when it is not possible to physically distance and if you have any COVID-19 symptoms or are known to have been exposed to the virus get tested and act on the result.



Karumba Road, Karumba, Queensland

ANIMAL HAZARDS UNIQUE TO OUR NORTH QUEENSLAND TOURS

SALT WATER CROCODILES or Estuarine Crocodiles are the largest natural predator in North Queensland. They can be found in both salt water and fresh water and they are regularly found in rivers many hundreds of kilometres from the sea. Salt Water Crocodiles are known to attack humans so it is important to respect these animals and take the threat they present seriously. We treat all waterways that have a connection to the sea, no matter how temporary the connection, as possibly having salt water crocodiles. We regularly see them on the river banks close to the Gulf. Never stand on the water's edge with your back to the water in Croc Country. [This fact sheet provides information about how to Be Crocwise in Croc Country.](#)

CASSOWARIES are rare large flightless birds found throughout the rainforests in North Queensland. Cassowaries predominantly feed on the different fruits found in the rainforest. They are shy and wary of humans but if provoked, they are capable of inflicting serious injuries to people, [in fact they are considered the world's most dangerous bird](#). Even though we ride through Cassowary habitat we have never seen a Cassowary, however, the locals tell us they are there and we have seen their droppings on the edge of the road. [This fact sheet provides information about how to Be cass-O-wary.](#)

Never Be Complacent About Safety Think Safe - Act Safe



Dawson Highway, Bottle Tree Downs, Queensland.

Photo @TrinaPattersonPhotography

Photos: Mark Arundel unless specified otherwise

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