

E-Bike Tour of the Snowy Mountains

By Charlie Bellemore

This is the full-length version my e-bike ride through the Snowy Mountains region in New South Wales in November 2023.

The emphasis was cycling to and staying in small towns wherever possible. The other reason for the trip was to promote the use of public transport and e-bike cycle trips from a regional centre to other rural and regional towns in NSW. Sadly, supporting regional centres and small towns by e-bike tours is not encouraged by Transport for NSW. These towns desperately need the support of tourism to develop cycle rail trails, accommodation, cafes, restaurants and for local businesses to thrive.



Canberra Explorer XPT leaving from Central Station

In brief, Transport for NSW will not allow e-bikes to be transported on XPT trains to regional towns and centres due to the weight of the e-bike being greater than 20kgs for a bike box and the danger of e-bike batteries on board trains. I tried buying two bike box rail tickets for the XPT train to distribute the weight of the e bike to be under 20 kgs but I was thwarted - the rules stipulate one bike box per passenger. The irony of this situation is I caught the train from Berry to Sydney at the completion of the trip, fully laden e-bike not a problem, as it's part of the [Intercity rail network](#). So, if you start your trip from Sydney, Newcastle, Dungog, Wollongong or as far south as Bomaderry, you will have no problems rolling your e-bike and gear on board. Try to get into the dedicated carriage for bicycles. I used the last carriage on the train and strapped the e bike to the pole inside the carriage area not blocking entry/exit areas. Most bus companies have a similar policy of not transporting e-bikes due to the battery possibly exploding.



Countryside between Tarago and Bungendore

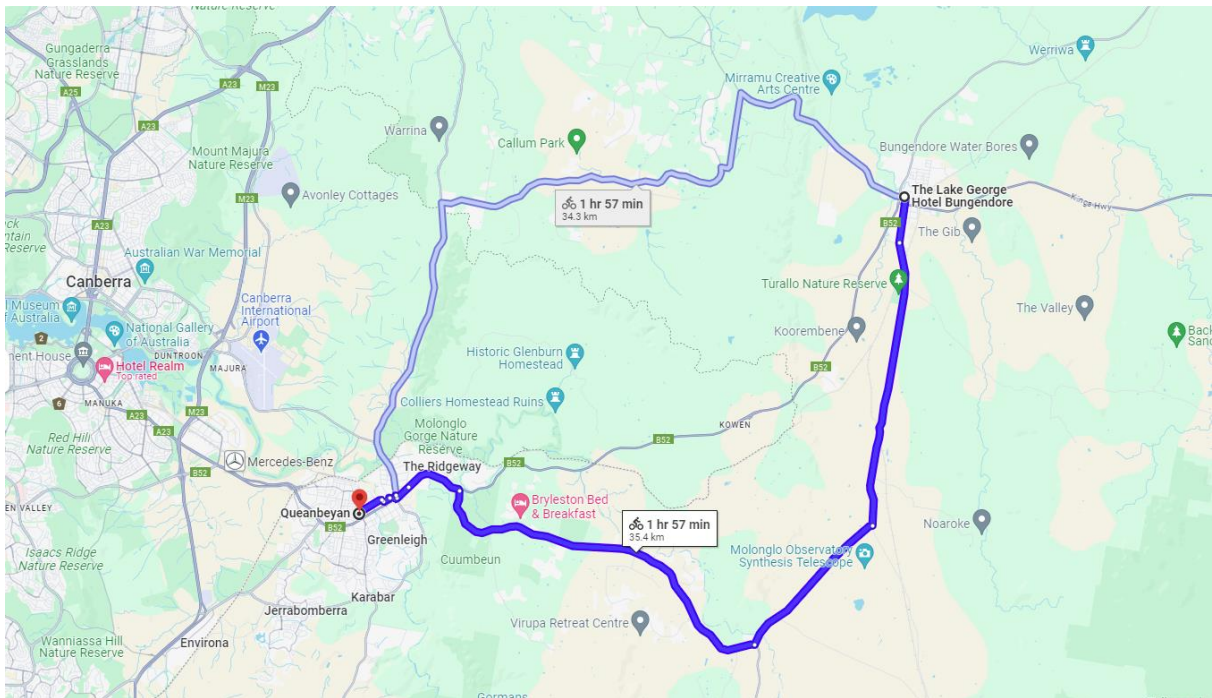
So I freighted the boxed e-bike from Coffs Harbour to Bungendore to my first stop at the Lake George Hotel, Bungendore. It was the only way I could contemplate the trip. When I enquired with the publican the attitude to having the bike box being delivered to the public bar, he replied "no worries". After an overnight train from Coffs Harbour, I caught the Canberra XPT from Sydney Central and got off at Bungendore. The great thing about train travel is the people you meet. I sat next to Jules, a devotee of obscure alternative bands from the 1970s to contemporary times. She attends regular gigs and spent some time talking to me about Devo.

The Lake George Hotel is a short distance from the station and is a great spot to stay. Interesting place, as the owner was a former Wallaby rugby player Richard Harry and he has displayed a myriad of international jerseys one of the walls in the pub. The other place to visit is the leather shop to view the most amazing leather goods.



The Leather Shop and Saddlery, Bungendore. Family-owned business over three generations.

Day 2 Bungendore to Queanbeyan via Captains Flat Road



After loading up the e-bike, I had a quiet cycle around the town to check the weight distribution of the panniers and other items I was carrying before heading south. I tried to avoid the highway preferring quieter roads on the trip. Hoskinstown Road and Captains Flat Road were two roads to cycle on for the beautiful scenery and were relatively quiet traffic-wise. On reflection, taking the old Sydney Road, an unsealed road off Captains Flat Road would have been a better alternative rather than mixing it with speeding traffic on the Kings Highway entering Queanbeyan. There are plenty of good cycle paths around the city and there are plenty of accommodation choices. I stayed at Canberra Avenue Villas self-contained unit with good kitchen facilities.

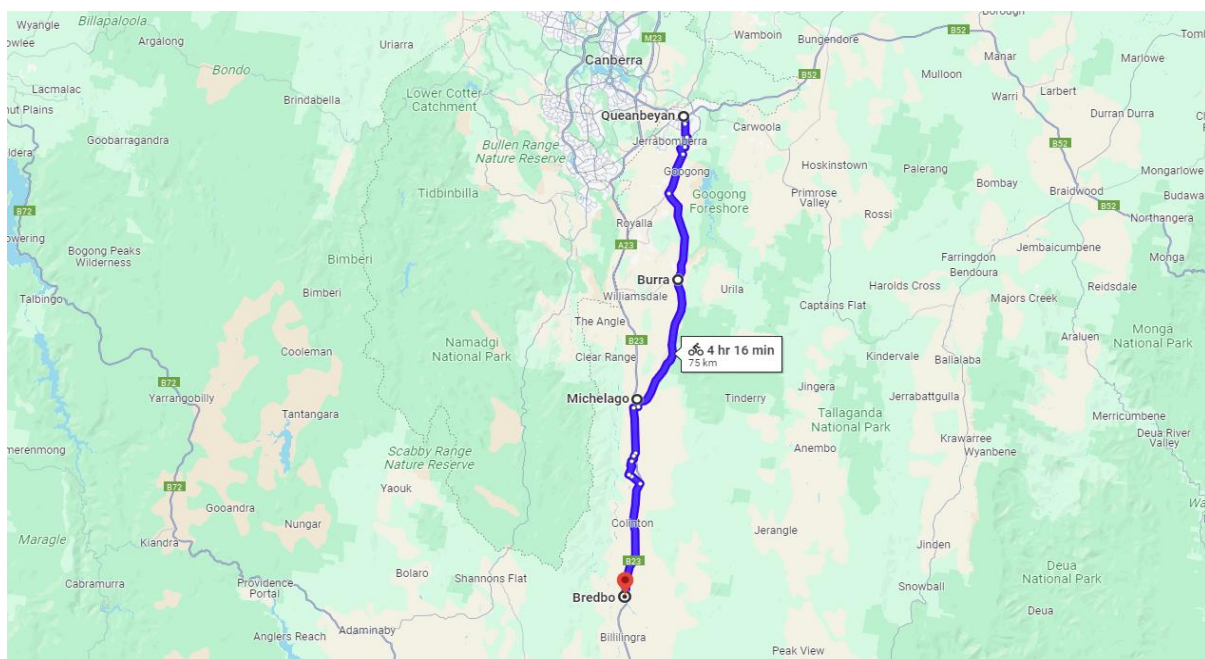


Typical countryside on Captains Flat Road



Curious cattle near my morning tea spot, near Carwoola.

Day 3, Queanbeyan to Bredbo was a longer trek than planned, as I used Google Maps as indicated on the map below. I started off following the road out of Queanbeyan to Googong where there are great cycle paths due to the recent housing development there but it petered out just before the left turn off to Burra so I was back on the main road for a short distance. Lots of hills on a sealed road up to Burra where I had my morning tea stop. It's very eye-catching countryside. The community hall, oval and shelters at Burra is a great place to stop and there are clean toilets there. Riding on from Burra, there are a number of hills and descents leading onto an unsealed road to Michelago. The farmlands and hills were beautiful to see, so take your time riding along this part. It's worth a lunch stop at Michelago, as the old railway station has been maintained by the local historical society and gives an interesting peak into railway life of the 19-20th centuries.



Day 3 Queanbeyan to Bredbo



Burra Community Centre and Shelter



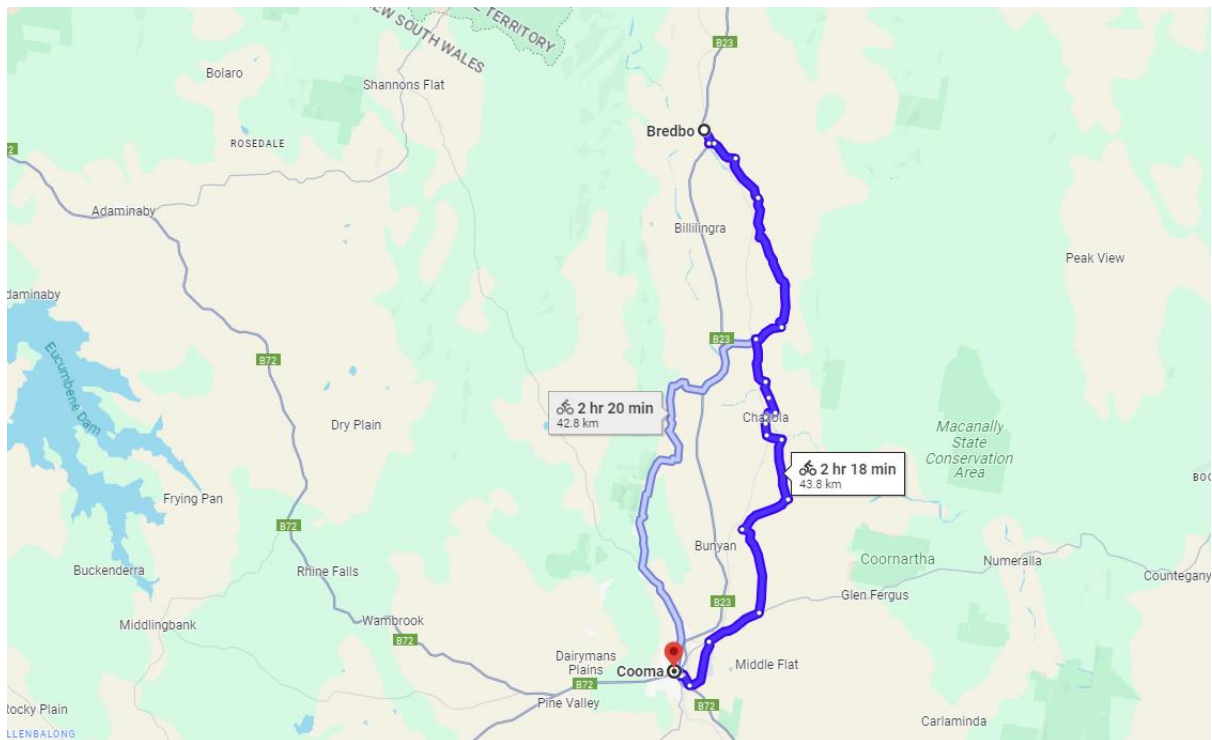
Michelago Railway station



I checked with Google Maps and it indicated there was an unsealed road running parallel to the Monaro Highway which I took for a number of kilometres. All was going well until I came across the first of fenced off road with a sign "private property" on it. I had no alternative but to retrace my path back to the highway where I was given a prolonged free shower along the highway to Bredbo. It did not stop raining heavily, so ensure you have a good wet weather coat for moments like these!

All up a 75 km day turned into a 100 km day due to the error on Google Maps! I stayed at the Bredbo Inn and I can recommend the homemade lasagne - perfect after a wet and cold day. I conserved the battery life by turning the battery off on any descent and I used the lowest battery assistance so my total range could reach up to 100kms.

Day 4 Bredbo to Cooma



I tried the route indicated on Google Maps from Bredbo via Chakola to Cooma. Again, I was stopped by a farmer's gate locked blocking my path and having to retrace my tracks to Bredbo. The road itself is quiet a beautiful jaunt in the countryside but after fording a stream twice and feeling somewhat frustrated the highway was the only alternative. There is a wonderful pie shop and coffee stop at Bredbo, so it was not a wasted effort! Again, Google maps indicated an alternate route to Cooma as indicated by the light blue route, but I found a farmer had locked the gate and access to this pathway, so the only route was via the highway. My only advice is taking your time, stick to the verge and if in doubt just pull over if there are large trucks passing through. I had a lunch break at Numeralla River Rest stop as it had shelter toilets and scenic views.

Cooma was an interesting place to stop with some beautiful Victorian era buildings such as the post office, courthouse and gaol. There is even a Correctional Services Museum! Cooma is a good place to get food and the cafes here are good. My pick was the Lott Café for breakfast and the pizzas on Sunday night at the Alpine Hotel are hard to beat. Accommodation is plentiful so it's a matter of price and comfort level.



*Rest Stop at
Numeralla River*



Cooma Courthouse



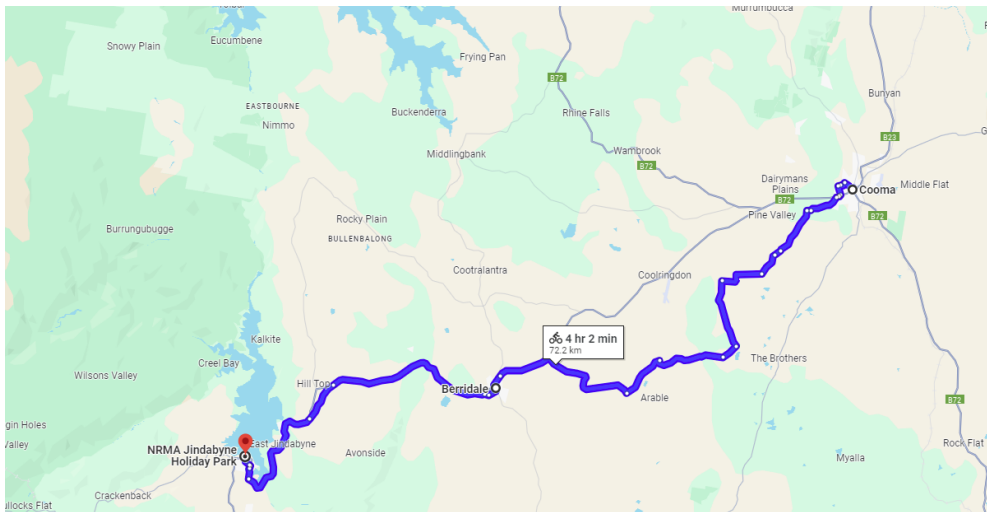
The Correctional Services Museum



Alpine Hotel and pizzas



Day 5 Cooma to Jindabyne



I cycled the highway after trying an alternate route which petered out after a few kilometres. A fellow local cyclist who stopped to help me when I was trying to figure out a way south basically told me the highway was the only way to get to Jindabyne but advised me that truck traffic up to the Adaminiby turn-off was busy then it becomes much quieter along the highway. I had an early lunch stop at Berridale where there are toilets, shelter and a nice park to have a well-earned rest.

The rest of the trip was pretty good with some decent ascents getting to Jindabyne. The sheep properties are quite beautiful up here. Be careful approaching Jindabyne as the road narrows past the dam and there is a narrow verge.

I checked in at the NRMA Caravan Park where you can rent a studio with lockable bicycle storage. I stayed here for 4 nights and I would recommend this place to stay for its location, facilities and bike friendly managers. The shopping centre is within easy walking distance and the National Parks Office and Visitor Centre is well worth visiting as I hired an emergency transponder for cycling up to Mount Kosciuszko the next day.



There was always something to view in this spectacular landscape

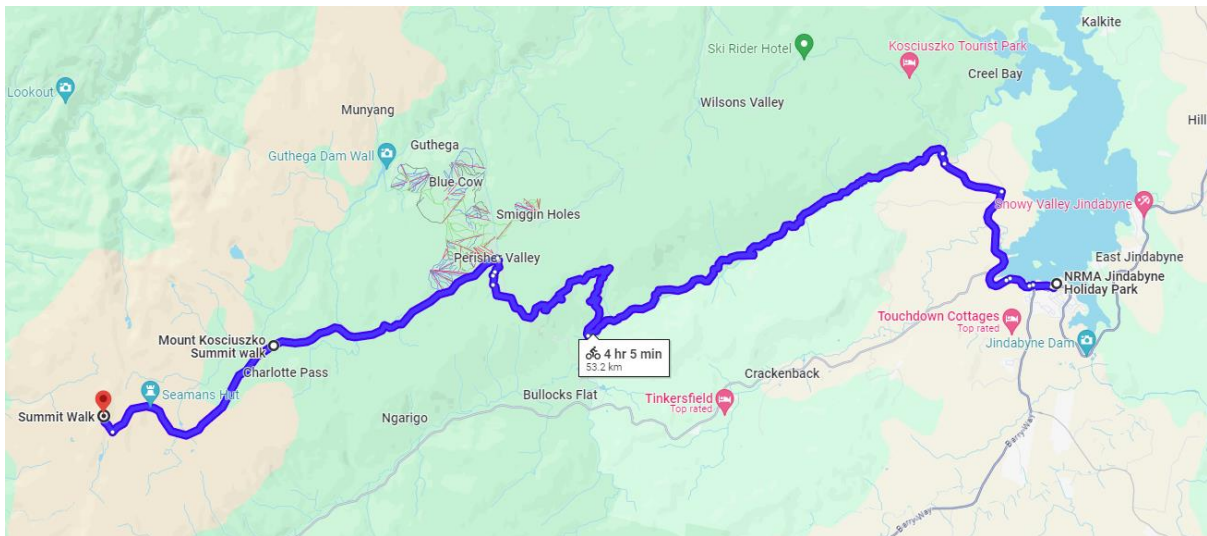


First sighting of snow outside of Jindabyne



There is a lot of climbing but the landscapes are beautiful

Day 6 Jindabyne to Mount Kosciuszko



One of the reasons I decided to stay in Jindabyne for 4 nights was to relax but also get the best weather conditions to go to Mount Kosciuszko. As it turned out the next day was the pick of the days to cycle up there. Ensure you let National Parks know you are travelling up there if solo and hire an emergency beacon transponder from them. I took a change of warm clothing and enough food/water if I got caught up there overnight. Weather conditions change quickly. The ride is 100kms return so be conservative with your battery. I used quite a lot of the battery climbing up to Charlottes Pass and I decided to turn off the battery on the walking path up to Rawsons Hut where you have to secure your e-bike and walk the remaining few kilometres to the summit.

Today's ride was one of the most challenging climbs but at the same time the most beautiful journeys you can make. Every corner presented something new and the views were breathtaking. I set off at 7.15 am and I returned to my accommodation at around 5.30pm. I was passed by cyclists from the local Jindabyne Club and they were friendly and positive. I had a lovely chat to a bus load of people from Sydney and they said they passed me three times as they stopped at Perisher Valley, Smiggins Hole and outside of Jindabyne! They were all keen to know how long it would take me descending from the mountain. It was a bit over two hours.

Ensure you have time to visit the emergency Seaman's Hut. A fully functional hut complete with food, a pot belly stove and bunks. The summit walk can be difficult in a few parts with loose stones but generally an accessible track. There was still snow about and I had to traverse through it in two sections. The view from the summit was beautiful and there was an amazing panorama of snow topped mountains to see.

I had two bars out of five left on my battery and I needed that for the descent as there are three big hills back to Jindabyne. The rest of it is a wonderful descent. I left Charlottes Pass at 3.30pm. Most of the traffic had gone for the day.



*I could look at this
scenery all day near
Seaman's Hut*

It's a climb getting to Charlottes Pass!



Seaman's Hut



Excellent First Nations cultural signage



Rawsons Hut Highest altitude toilets in Australia but closed when I visited!



The view from the Summit



Myself at the Summit

Day 7 Rest Day at Jindabyne

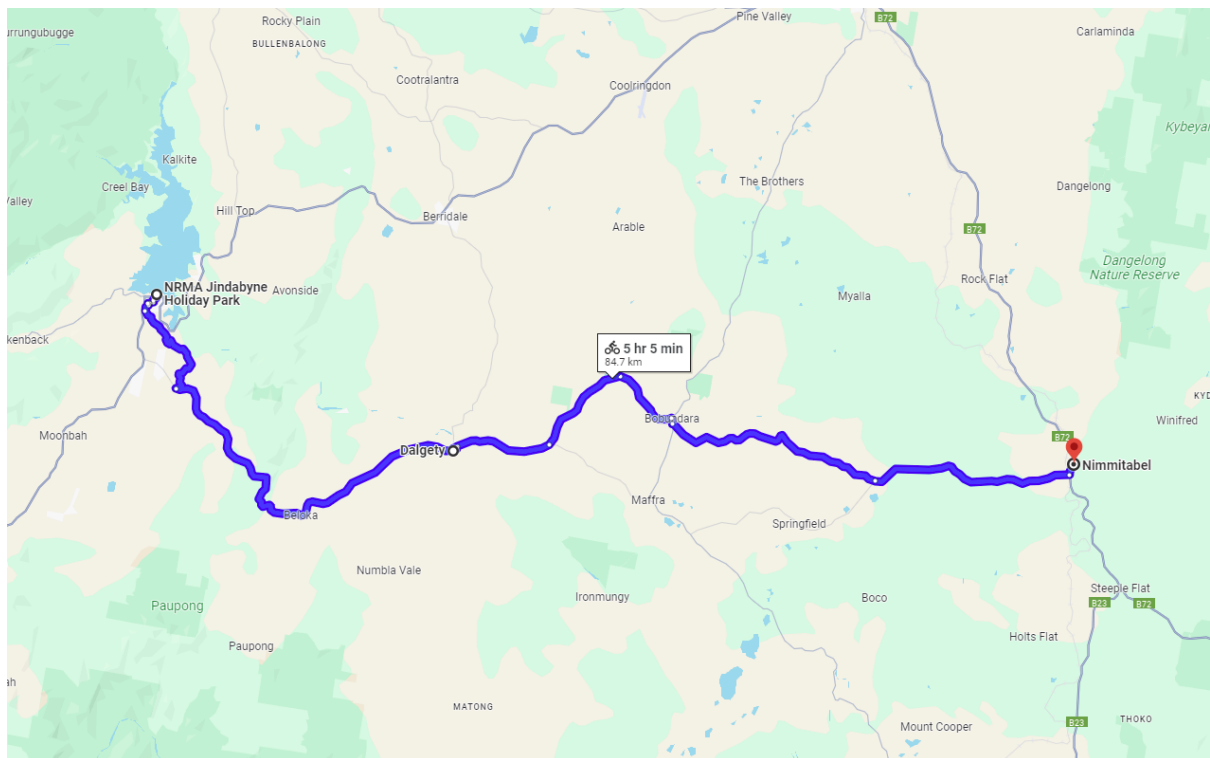
Although I would check the e-bike each day, I gave the bike a thorough clean and oil. Washing clothes and walks around the Lake Jindabyne was a welcome change from climbing hills. There are a lot of interesting outdoor sculptures along the way. The best find of the day was having a cheap lunch at the Bowling Club with great views of the mountains. Wander around the village and it became quite clear mountain biking was really taking off as the summer sport down here. Many shops turned from snowboarding shops to cycling venues to cater for the growing number of summer tourists.

When I decided on cycling down here there were really only two months that I felt were suitable and they were November and March. It is not too hot nor too cold cycling the distances.

Now it was time to cycle from Jindabyne to Bombala via Nimmitabel!

Day 10 Jindabyne to Nimmitabel via Dalgety

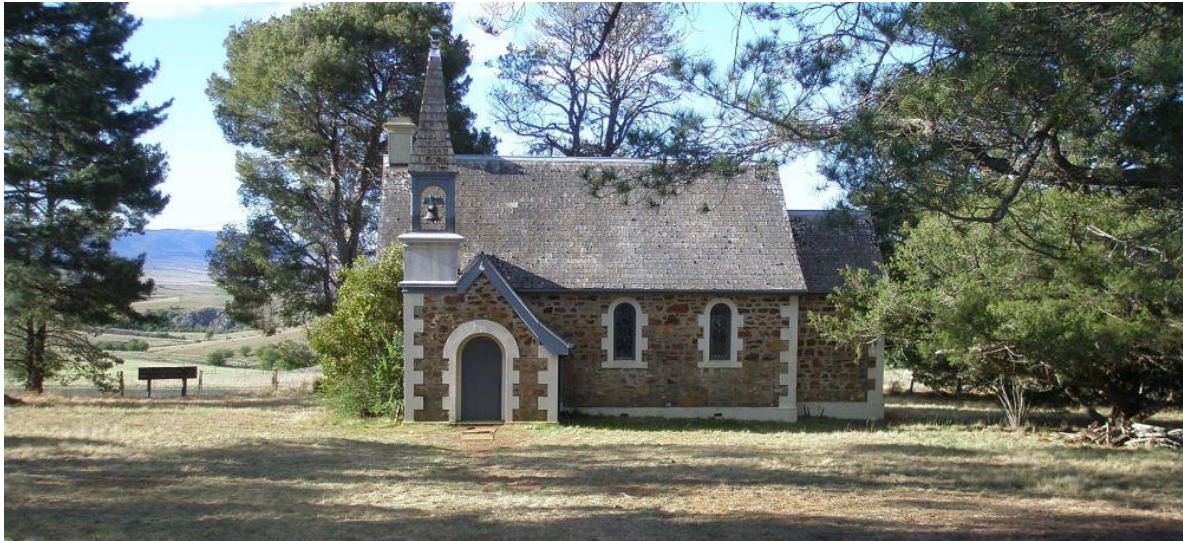
After spending four nights, I left Jindabyne via the Snowy River Way, a good road with limited traffic and excellent weather conditions. This leg was about 85kms and was marked by beautiful rolling countryside for the first 20kms.



The Monaro High Country has some expansive sheep properties and solid stone homesteads. I took a moment admiring the view before tackling the infamous Boloco descent ranging from 11-17% in parts. Although it's only a few kilometres long, it is one of the steepest and challenging descents you can make in cycling. How the cyclists who tackle this climb for fundraising charities is beyond my imagination. The graffiti painted on the road with quips of "shut up legs" or "are you ready?" sums up the challenge of climbing this section.

I passed one of the largest sheep properties in the Snowy Mountains called Boloco Station, a 1620-hectare property with self-contained accommodation would have been worth a look next time I pass

through this way. I had to stop at a delightful church for my morning tea break called Saint James Church Boloco set in an isolated part of the country. The building made from stone and slate roofing around 1873 one of the first churches in the Snowy Mountains. One of the things I looked for when stopping was shade and there is a lovely stand of trees to cool off under surrounding the church.



St James Church in Boloco

The ride into Dalgety was fabulous as the descent allowed for expansive views of the Snowy Mountains countryside. Anytime I ascended a long climb, I would simply take a break for a moment and capture the scenery with a few pictures. Dalgety itself although not large has many fascinating reminders of what an important hub the town played in the sheep industry in the Snowy Mountains.



Countryside around Dalgety

Crossing the Snowy River along a single lane wooden bridge, I had a quick look around the river area where old sheep pens and buildings can still be visible. It's hard to believe Dalgety was considered a possible site for the nation's capital in 1904. I'm glad they shelved that idea. I had lunch at the Buckley's Crossing Hotel (1889), a friendly pub with great counter lunches. I went for the steak sandwich and chips - highly recommended. Everyone is up for a chat here and it was so interesting to hear the locals' stories.



Afternoon tea with a big group of friendly bike riders

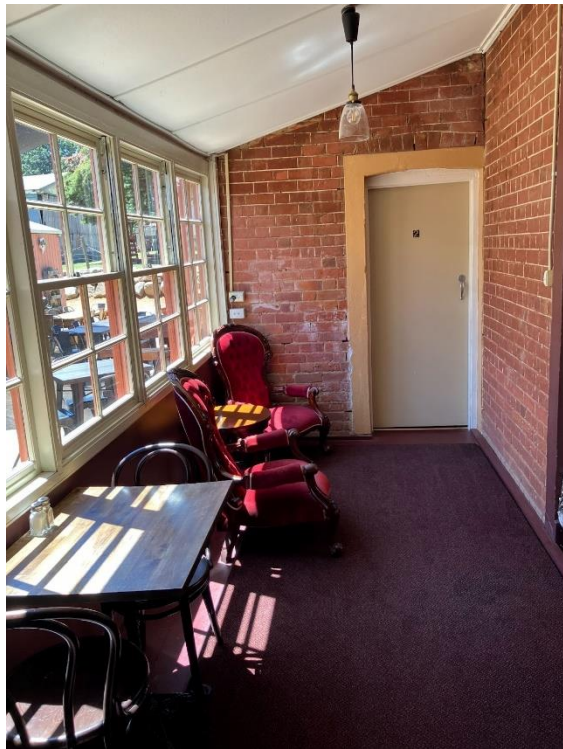
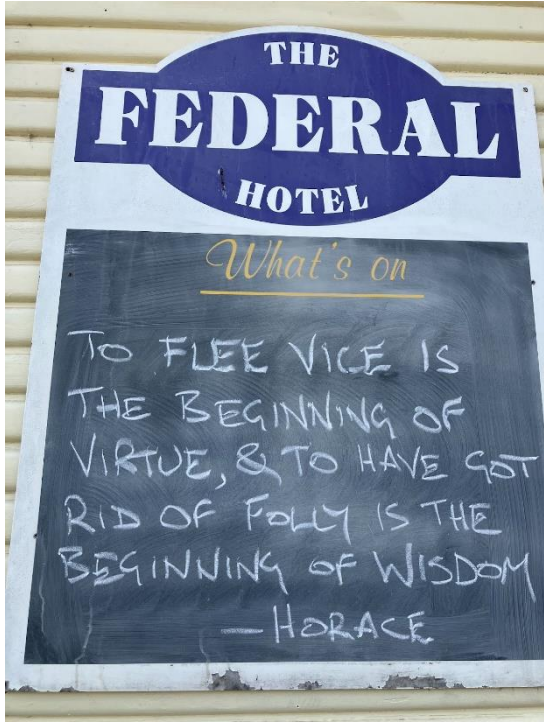
I decided to cycle to Maffra after being given advice from the publican that the road had been re-surfaced and the Springfield Road had recently been regraded. Taking the Springfield Road left off the Snowy River Way, the temperature started to climb and although I had enough water, I was looking to get out of the sun for a short spell when I stumbled on a group of cyclists from Canberra. This gang was completing a 5-day cycle trek from Canberra to Cooma and other places. The group, called Eros Esra Cycle Club, were most welcoming to me, offering me a hot cuppa and home-made biscuits. All over 60 years old, these men cycle together every year around November. They were a great bunch to meet.

Re-energised, I was stopped by a mob of sheep being directed along the road into a nearby paddock. These are things you don't see on cycle rides up north! The wind farms nearby are massive and a reminder of the transition period we are experiencing in the energy industry.



Stopped by sheep

Eventually I got to Nimmatabel after a fair bit of climbing and stayed at an old pub called the Federal where I managed to stay in the room writer Miles Franklin preferred when she was visiting Nimmatabel. The pub itself has not much changed over its 100-year-old history including stagecoach stables and waiting room as well as the overnight stop for many politicians and music legends. Tough, the barman, is well worth having a chat to and a reciter of bush ballads and poetry.



History and hospitality at the Federal Hotel in Nimmitabel



Day 11 Nimmatabel to Bombala

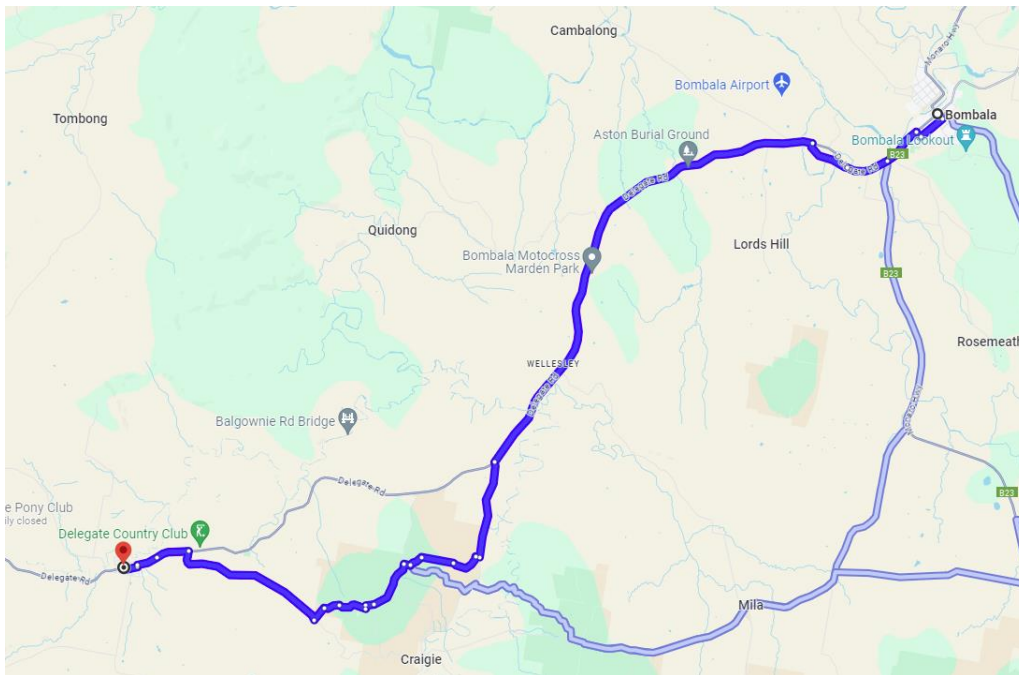
After breakfast at Bellz Café (highly recommended for a hot breakfast), I cycled south over two highway stretches. The first being the Snowy Mountains Highway which I recommend you pedal carefully and stick to the verge of the road. It was busy and in places the edges were not great. I turned right onto the Monaro Highway which was quieter but still had trucks hurtling by on occasions. Again, the scenery is spectacular as you pass sheep property after sheep property.

My morning tea break was at Ando Community Hall and Rural Fire centre. A quiet spot with the requisite outdoor toilet out the back. Farmers wave as they pass and the place has such a close-knit feel which I was to experience in many of the small towns I cycled through. Refreshed after the break, I cycled onto Bombala, the end of the train line from Queanbeyan now disused but well maintained by the local historical society. I stayed with friends in Bombala but there are several accommodation choices and it seems a popular destination for motorcyclists on weekends. The local museum and steam engine restoration group were in full swing when I arrived. If you want to experience a great café venture into the Cosmos café where you can get a great coffee and bacon and egg roll.



Bombala Historic Engine and Machinery Shed

Day 12 Bombala to Delegate



Today was a shorter ride of 46 kms. I bought food provisions back in Bombala as I was uncertain Delegate would have shops open on a Sunday. The ride was another beautiful one in magnificent high country with sheep grazing everywhere. I passed a large pine plantation which was a large employer of townspeople before taking a quiet road past the Bombala Racecourse to the Platypus Reserve, a conservation area for the protection of the beloved platypus. I watched and waited with another traveller in a caravan, but we had no luck - only ripples in the water. I often reflect on the kindness of travellers as this man offered hot water if I needed it for a cuppa before I headed off.



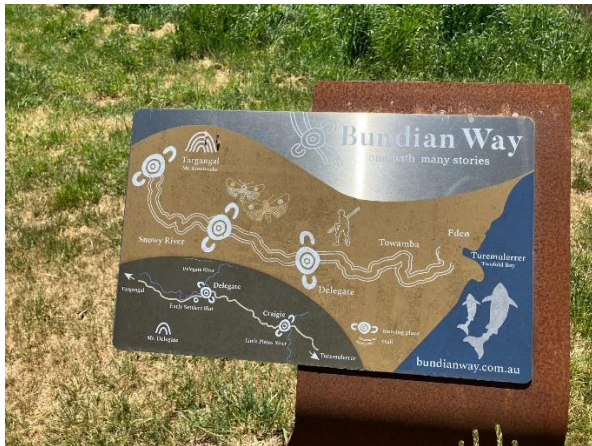
Platypus spotting opportunities abound near Bombala

One of the things you are wary of is bike mechanical failures. I had a massive rear flat tyre on the road to Delegate and I was very careful repairing it with a new tube and checking the inside of the tyre for glass or other debris. Thankfully the CO2 cartridge worked but I rode cautiously into Delegate. I had a late morning tea under a tree alongside a huge sheep property. *(image here)*. I stayed at a wonderful Nurses' Cottage at the old hospital in Delegate. It was clean and had great facilities. This was the best accommodation I had on the trip so far. You pay at the local museum.



The best accommodation!

The museum hosts a great collection of First Nations artists' works and it was here I learned of the Bundian Way, a traditional walking track going from Mount Kosciuszko to the south coast at Eden. I cooked up a rehydrated meal of Moroccan lamb as well as apple pie. The Delegate Hotel is the place to have a drink and meet people from the surrounding properties late afternoon.



Bundian Way signage



Day 13 Delegate to the Victorian Border

I cycled down to the Victoria-NSW border on the Delegate River where again it was wonderful to see a large herd of cattle feeding alongside the road whilst four fantastic cattle dogs kept them in tow. (see Image). One of the curious things you notice travelling here is the history of Aboriginal and non - Aboriginal contact history. Just outside of Delegate, I visited the earliest known settler's hut in the Snowy Mountains, restored thanks to a Bicentennial grant.



The Settler's Hut, one of the most fascinating buildings in all of the High Country, is found about 1km south-west of Delegate - superb example of an early pioneer's home



Further on was a small stone cairn with a brief mention of Aboriginal people being dispossessed of their land and were placed on a reserve nearby where there was no evidence of habitation. Luck was on my side when I returned to Delegate late afternoon and I sat near a small stream in the park and up popped a platypus' head before ducking down again!

Day 14 Delegate to Bombala

I cycled back up to Bombala where I went Bombala Cycles and Chainsaws shop in town to get a spare tube for the bike. A strange combination of retail where I met John and Joanne who are cycling enthusiasts. They informed me about the work completed by their local cycling club in the development of cycleways around town as well as their big project of developing a rail trail on the abandoned Queanbeyan to Bombala railway line. This seems to be a fabulous project and I do hope they can get enough funding and political support for the venture. It would attract cyclists from all over the place and would be an excellent tourist boost for the towns along the old railway line. It is great to learn that Bicycle NSW is campaigning for more [rail trails](#).

Day 15 Bombala to Nimmitabel 60kms

The 60km trip heading north was marked by long ascents and some great descents. There was a little rain about which made the trip a little tougher. I went back up the highway and I rode within myself as the amount of logging trucks passing me was a little disconcerting. When I heard a truck climbing up a hill behind me, I simply pulled off the road and let it pass. It allowed me to take in the scenery and grab my breath back.

I had morning tea at the Ando Community hall again. I took a thermos, keep cup, tea, coffee, powdered milk and snacks for morning tea breaks on the trip. There were few cafes where I was travelling, and you could stop wherever there was shade or a shed to rest. I found on some occasions bus shelters were great places to sit and enjoy a cuppa.

The latter part of the trip was marked by a wonderful, unsealed road called the Old Bombala Road where you caught glimpses of the Snowy Mountains with snow on the peaks and following the old railway line to Nimmitabel. There were lovely old timber sheds and make sure you stop by the

Maclaughlin Railway Station with its abandoned sheep pens and boarding area for goods trains heading north to Goulburn. I lunched at the Lake Williams Reserve, a great bush regeneration project where I met Michelle a keen cyclist from Melbourne. We talked about the future rail trail to Bombala.



The community is planning a 200km cycle trail along the disused rail corridor from Bombala to Queanbeyan. The trail will run through Queanbeyan, Michelago, Bredbo, Cooma, Nimmitabel and Bombala, bringing the enormous economic and social benefits that other rail trails have delivered for regional communities. Bicycle NSW's article is [here](#)

The final stretch of my trip took me from Nimmitabel to Berry, mainly on unsealed stretches of road.

Days 16-17 Nimmitabel to Numeralla via Kybeyan

I decided against cycling from Nimmitabel to Cooma then to Numeralla due to the volume of traffic especially logging trucks. Taking advice from some locals I left Nimmitabel heading on the old Bega Road turning left towards Kybeyan. This unsealed road leads onto Countegany before taking a left turn on the Cooma Road to Numeralla. The road is fairly corrugated and sandy in parts but there was virtually no traffic on the road. I had a farmer stop and ask me if I was ok during my morning tea break which I really appreciate people looking out for you. I had lunch at Countegany before arriving at Numeralla after some great descents and some tight hill climbs.

Numeralla is a beautiful country village where you can see the most amazing night sky. I stayed at Roo Haven and Helen is an outstanding host and keen astronomer.

Day 18 -19 Numeralla to Captains Flat

Today was a serious hill climbing day. The first 5 kilometres from Numeralla is a 910 metres climb to Peak View. I stopped at the Peak Hill Rural Fire Service Station and paid my respects to the American pilots killed in the plane crash during the terrible bushfires of 2019-2020. After having a break there, I took off to Jerangle, a small hamlet. The road was unsealed and parts of it were quite sandy so the going was slower than expected. I had an enjoyable lunch under a tree outside a small primary school. Entering Captains Flat is quite steep and the scars of the place being a mining town can be seen everywhere. There is a lot of work being conducted to rehabilitate the landscape over the next few years.

I stayed at the Captains Flat Hotel, a wonderful 1930s-styled building with heaps of character. I was lucky to ride here on Saturday as the Bowling Club is open for meals and drinks on this night only. The hotel was actually closed as it was being used as a backdrop for an upcoming movie to be released next year. Thanks to publican Greg Durr and colleague Beau for showing me around the place. It was great to wander the hills with them.



The art deco Captains Flat Hotel once boasted the longest bar in the Southern Hemisphere – at 32.2 metres - before it was chopped back to 22.8 metres!

Day 20 Captains Flat to Braidwood

Climbing steeply out of Captains Flat and attacked by a resident magpie, I turned left along Harolds Cross passing Tallangandra National Park, a magnificent forested road where I spotted a wombat by the side of the road. I turned off this road and headed towards Bendoura which led onto the Cooma Road heading towards the Shoalhaven River. This was a relaxing spot to have a morning tea break by the river past the bridge.

Arriving in Braidwood felt like being in a large urban area after trekking through small towns and villages. Booking into the Royal Hotel, I walked into a film set for the ABC's Backroads Program. Heather Ewart was interviewing the publican and a few locals about life in Braidwood. Make sure you spend time wandering through the shops along the main street in Braidwood especially the Kerosene Lamp Shop and the Toy Model car shop. There are lots of good cafes and eateries here.

Day 21 Braidwood to Nerriga

The first 20 kms climbing out of Braidwood are eye-catching with rolling hills sheep and big skies on a sealed road. The rest of the trip of 35 kms was on unsealed road which is used by trucks as well so caution is needed with your cycling. I stopped at Charleyong for a morning tea break. So glad I bought pastries at the Bakery in Braidwood! When you come into Nerriga the extent of the bushfires and how close they got to this place was quite scary. The Nerriga Hotel where I stayed was the last place of refuge for the townspeople during the 2019-2020 bushfires. It's worth spending a moment reading the information board and relics from the bushfires outside the hotel. The accommodation was comfortable and the meal provided by the owners - a lasagne - was one of the best meals I enjoyed on the trip.

Day 22-23 Nerriga to Nowra and Berry

Although the 68 kms trip down to Nowra seemed like an easy ride there were a few tight hill climbs before the descent. I had a stop at Tianjara, a beautiful waterfall in the Moreton National Park. The descent down to Nowra was tricky in parts with the edge of the road quite potholed and the volume of traffic especially trucks made me ride very cautiously to the Fleet Arm Museum at Albatross Naval base.



Tianjara Falls is a great place to stop on the way into Nowra.

Nowra has a multitude of accommodation, restaurants and cafes. Greys Beach is worth a look. The latest roadworks around the Shoalhaven River has well-structured cycle paths. I took the road to Bomaderry and then passed the huge Mahindra factory along a good cycle path that follows the Shoalhaven River out towards the head of the Shoalhaven River. After a visit to the Botanic Gardens, I cycled along the Coolangatta Road to Berry. The old Butter Factory in Berry is now a boutique confectionery shop and ice cream café. The ice cream was wonderful.

Berry is a good place to end the trip because you can roll your e-bike on to the train back to Sydney.

So ended my cycle trip of well over 1000kms and I would recommend you take the time and visit the many wonderful small towns in the Snowy Mountains region.

Please get in touch if you would like any more tips or information for planning a similar trip. My email address is charlesbellemore@gmail.com