



Cycling events & their tourism benefits

Organised cycling events have great potential to attract domestic and international tourists and to increase awareness of regional destinations. This fact sheet outlines some of the benefits of cycling tourism.

In Australia organised cycling events are attracting more and more people every year. Annual supported 'big rides' run by state cycling organisations in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria each attract between 800 and 8000 people and together inject many millions into the economy. In Victoria two events, 'Around the Bay in a Day', a 210km day ride, and the 'Great Victorian Bike Ride', a 9 day supported ride, attracted more than 8000 riders each in 2004.

As well as paying an entry fee to ride, participants inject money into the host community by buying food, accommodation and transport. Riders travelling from interstate or overseas may also choose to holiday in the area before or after the event,

and may choose to return on other occasions after their initial exposure to the destinations.

Many of these organised cycling events are held in, or travel through regional areas, which stand to benefit from the immediate economic boost as well as an increased awareness of their attractions.

Overseas trends indicate that cycling tourism could reach 5-10% of the total tourism market particularly in some regions of Europe and the USA. Currently Cycle Tourism is valued at £635 million per year in the UK, with a forecast of £14 billion per year within the next 20 years across Europe.

However, despite the size of the cycle-tourism market overseas, little

formal research on the potential of this market has been done in Australia. To try to remedy this, the Cycling Promotion Fund commissioned a survey of the participants in the 2003 and 2004 'be active tour', a semi-competitive day cycling event ran in conjunction with the 'Jacobs Creek Tour Down Under' international bicycle race in South Australia.

More than 620 recreational riders rode the 'be active tour' in 2003 and 1400 in 2004 and increase of 125%. The majority of the participants came from South Australia (77%) other participants came from interstate and overseas. The following observations about the tourism benefits of cycling events have been extrapolated from this survey.



Cycling Events Have an Assured Market

If you organise cycling events, the riders will come; cyclists who join organised rides typically attend several throughout the year.

If you organise cycling events well, the riders will return and will promote the event to others. Cycling is this group's passion, and each person spends a significant amount of time and money on cycling.

This indicates significant opportunities for cross-promotion of cycling events and co-operation between organisers. Ensuring participants are satisfied is one of the best ways to ensure the success and growth of future events.

Respondents personally owned an average of 2.2 bicycles. The most popular bikes were road bikes and mountain bikes, 42% owned bicycles with a value of more than \$2,000. 98% of respondents cycle recreationally, with 71% cycling at least two-three days per week for recreational purposes.

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Respondents found the challenge of participation to be by far the most important motivator, and the exclusive opportunity to be associated with the 'Jacobs Creek Down Under'.

Cycle Tourists Have High Disposable Incomes

People attracted to cycling events are typically aged between 25-54 years and are professionals or semi-professionals, 79% of respondents were in 'professional' employment or semi professional/clerical' suggesting they are a group with a high disposable income.

Cycling Event Participants Spend Up Big

Organised cycling events inject significant amounts of money into the community. On average, participants spent \$651.91 per person. The overall average expenditure for residents of South Australia was \$255.59, and for visitors to South Australia \$1087.08. On average people spent \$147 on accommodation, \$105.46 on meals/food/drink, \$90.36 other purchases, \$ \$77.20 Pre-event and \$62.09 packages.

Cycling Events Generate Tourism for Years

Attracting people to an area for a cycling event is likely to result in repeat visitation. Organising a cycling event in conjunction with another tourist event is likely to attract more interstate visitors and more first-timers.

53% of respondents who were visitors to South Australia witnessed a stage of the 'Tour Down Under' for the first time in 2004. 32% of the South Australia resident respondents have witnessed a stage every year since it's inception in 1999.

For 30% of respondents, the 'be active tour' was the key driver for witnessing the 'Tour Down Under' 2004.

Cycling Events Have Significant Tourism Flow-On Effects

Organised cycling events encourage residents to holiday at home rather than travel interstate or overseas. They also raise awareness of regional tourism destinations and are likely to result in a longer holiday being planned around the cycling event.

16% of South Australian resident respondents chose to participate in the '*be active tour*' rather than take a holiday interstate or overseas.



Of the 128 visitor respondents, 110 indicated their reasons for visiting South Australia. Reasons for visiting include watching the 'Jacobs Creek Down Under', to participate in the '*be active tour*', and to have a holiday. 91% of visitors to South Australia for the '*be active tour*' **stayed on average of 10 bed-nights**. Of the 91%, at least one bed night was stayed in Adelaide and suburbs. 85% of visitors intend to revisit South Australia.

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Demographics

A recent study in Vancouver shows that cycle tourists are:

Primarily aged 30–55; 44% are age 30-35, 33% are age 46-55, 6% are age 56-65 and 17% are under age 30

Professional – White collar jobs, most with annual incomes of over Cdn\$60,000 (AUD \$63,185)

47% have annual incomes of Cdn \$60,000 to 80,000. 18% have annual incomes of over 80,000, 12% have annual incomes over \$40,000 to 60,000, and 23% have incomes under Cdn \$40,000.

White collar and use all types of accommodation,

From camping to five star hotels, relying on cafes and restaurants along the route for supplies.

Enjoy eating out, canoeing / kayaking, hiking, theatre, shopping, museums / historic sites, water sports / swimming / beaches.

The above represent the most popular interests in a declining order of frequency

Average length of stay

Cycling short breaks – 2 nights, long cycling holidays – 7.1 nights, all cycling holidays – 4.4 nights

Leisure cyclists represent 2/3 of the adult working population;

Leisure cyclists cycle for recreation and leisure. These folks prefer bike lanes and separate multi use trails, and would sign up for a guided tour with rented bikes.

Conclusion

Organised cycling events offer enormous potential to generate tourism income and increase awareness of regional destinations. Co-ordinated planning, significant promotions interstate and overseas, and running the event smoothly and professionally will help ensure high participation and a high return rate. Communities can benefit from cycle tourism by organising events themselves or in co-operation with a cycling organisation, as well as by providing infrastructure and signage that encourages cyclists to their area and builds a reputation for the region as a cycling destination.

Bring Bicycle Tourism to your region.

For advice on setting up rides or to find out how to attract an organised ride to your region, contact:

Bicycle South Australia

08 8232 2644

www.bikesa.as.au

The Centre for Excellence in Cycle Tourism (Peter Solly)

08 8232 2644

www.cycletourism.com.au

This survey was undertaken in partnership between Bicycle South Australia and the Cycling Promotion Fund.

For further information, or to obtain a copy of the full report contact the Cycling Promotion Fund 03 98181544 or Bicycle South Australia, Adelaide 08 8232 2644

