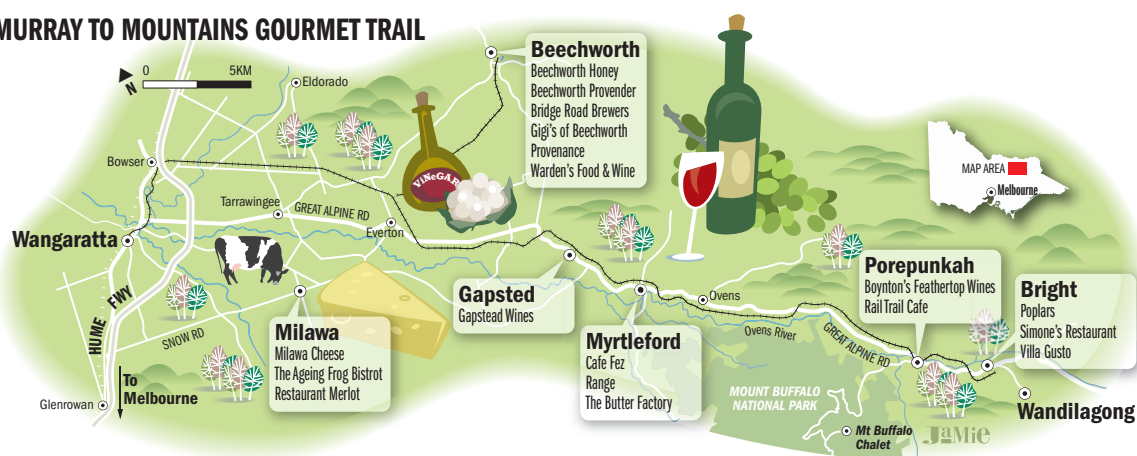


MURRAY TO MOUNTAINS GOURMET TRAIL



produce baskets that are loaned free to visitors to ride between the three business. The project is cheekily called The Town Bike. The local food group has also developed a series of touring maps called Pedal to Produce and the local council is developing 12 mountain-bike trails in the forests around north-eastern towns.

Boynton's Feathertop Winery at Porepunkah sits on a rail trail and owners Kel and Janelle Boynton have made a concerted effort to become more bike-friendly. They have installed bike racks, put up signs advising where to fill drink bottles and have a delivery service for wine purchases to be dropped off at the riders' accommodation in the region. "So instead of seeing a cyclist as someone who was on a bike with no room for wine — someone who used our toilets and drank our water — we changed our thinking to viewing them as potential customers," says Janelle. "No matter which way you cut it, bike riders are great tourists. They are low-impact and good spenders. And they are hungry."

Near neighbours Jesse Rios and Lucy O'Dwyer opened the Rail Trail Cafe in September 2008. They transformed an old butcher's shop into a young/fun cafe serving all-day breakfasts and food reflecting Rios's Mexican heritage. "Our customers are 50 per cent local and 50 per cent riders," O'Dwyer says. "They all share a love of good food."

At Mount Evelyn, rider recovery



PICTURE: MICHAEL CLAYTON-JONES

and fuel are at the heart of the 20 Mile Muffin, a power treat of fruit and nuts, baked daily at the Cog Bike Cafe. Adjoining the Lilydale to Warburton rail trail, it is run by Libby Evans, above, and Damian Auton, who came up with the concept while rock climbing in Germany. "We visited a climbing area with an old farmhouse next to it selling freshly baked bread and coffee. It was at the end of a road but it was busy," Evans says. "I think it was a matter of build it and they will come." That was 2005 and business has been good, with the pair looking at opening another business on the track. The cafe is now a focal point for customers who have formed a social group and Auton

"No matter which way you cut it, bike riders are great tourists. They are low-impact and good spenders. And they are hungry."

JANELLE BOYNTON

leads mountain-bike rides every Thursday night after he has turned off the coffee machine.

The couple also run social rides to Warburton with a reward-for-exercise at the end — food and beer. The beer is provided by Dean O'Callaghan, the son of a Healesville brewer and owner of the Good Brew Company — a green beer company that "facilitates sustainable catering" by delivering the beer on bike. The bike is a solid Christiana with a large box on the front supported by two wheels. There's a keg inside, and gas and ice to chill the amber refreshment. For Evans and Auton, however, the core business is the 300 riders who pass by them each day on

a weekend. More than a third stop for a coffee. Many seek out the muffins or roasted pumpkin toast, Meredith sheep cheese or home-made pesto on artisan bread.

A short ride towards Warburton, as the trail sweeps past Seville, you round the bend and see a train carriage in a paddock. It's hard to get to the Carriage Cafe if you don't have a bike because there is no direct car access. Owner Melanie Hardcastle has invested close to \$250,000 in moving the 1910 carriage to the family property on the banks of Wandin Yallock Creek. The menu is simple: baked potatoes topped with bolognese sauce, smoked salmon focaccia and pumpkin gnocchi with pesto. Locals make the five-minute walk down a track but the other 50 per cent of customers are bike riders — many of whom come from the inner northern suburbs of Melbourne, the home of city cycling.

Far from the grass, gravel and gum trees of the state's rail trails, the managing director of Northcote's Human Powered Cycles, Bill Bretherton, is packing up his folding Brompton bike and heading to the Netherlands for a bike conference. After that he will tour Europe on what is essentially a stylish city bike — except this version has a pannier strapped to the frame. He is in constant contact with the stylish urban rider — a person who wants sustainable urban transport without sacrificing style. The epitome of GenY cool. "Cycling is social in nature," Bretherton says. "Riders are not isolated in the steel structure of a car and so naturally interact with someone who clearly shows something in common with them. Coffee is an essential part of that."

Dave and Lea Morgan opened Boundary Cafe six months ago. Thirty per cent of their customers are bike riders and, with an expectation of an increase, they have applied for more bike racks. Last year the local council spent about \$800,000 on bike projects. By comparison, the City of Melbourne is adding another 200 bike hoops in places where there is demand. Increasingly, car parking spaces are giving way to

Ride and eat

- Murray to Mountains Rail Trail, Wangaratta to Bright, 83 kilometres, murraytomountains.com.au
- Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail, 40 kilometres, railtrails.org.au
- Bairnsdale to Newmerella, 94 kilometres, railtrails.org.au
- Warramboul to Port Fairy, 30 kilometres, railtrails.org.au
- Ballarat to Skipton 55 kilometres railtrails.org.au
- Boynton's Winery, 6619 Great Alpine Road, Porepunkah, 5756 2356. www.boynton.com.au
- Cog Bike Cafe, 4 Clancy Road, Mount Evelyn, 9736 4999, cogbikecafe.com.au
- Carriage Cafe, via Seymour Street, Seville, 5964 2773, carriagecafe.com.au
- Boundary Espresso, 107 Plenty Road, Preston, 9484 0260, boundaryespresso.tumblr.com
- Rail Trail Cafe, 2 Service Street, Porepunkah, 0428 359 884, railtrailcafe.com.au
- Milawa Tours Bike Tours, 5727 3521, milawatours.com.au

■ **References** *Bike Paths and Rail Trails* from bike shops and RACV shops, \$24.95, bikepaths.com.au

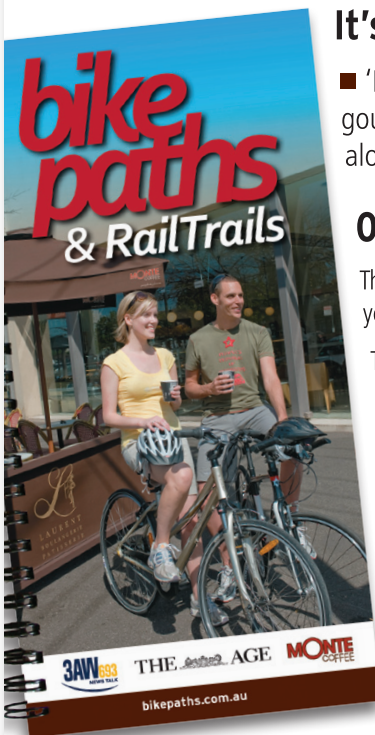
bike spaces to satisfy demand.

To pretend that the hungry rider is a new phenomenon, however, would be remiss. Journalist and lifelong bicycle advocate Keith Dunstan is 85 and still rides with his mates in the Too Old Bicycling Club every Friday. Their trips of about 30 kilometres always involve food. Dunstan was introduced to the peanut butter, honey and banana sandwich while riding across the US in the 1970s, but these days he settles for something a little more urbane.

He's a fan of Vincents Cafe Restaurant in Beaumaris, which serves a \$12.50 pasta and salad lunch special with a glass of wine, the scones at Cafe Busaria behind Como House in South Yarra and the coffee at Eureka in Fitzroy North. "There is a chain of communication that has always existed among cyclists, and the places selling the best food and coffee are quickly passed between cyclists," he says.

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