

Finding Places to Ride and People to Ride With

What's included in this fact sheet:

- Places to ride
- Off-street and recreational riding
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Other fact sheets in this series:

- Getting started
- Buying a suitable bike
- Riding with children
- Basic bike maintenance

This fact sheet helps you find safe and enjoyable places to ride and connect with local cycling groups and other people to ride with.

Places to ride

Where you ride depends on why you are riding and how confident you feel on a bike. Whether you are riding for fun or to get from place to place, there are many options available. This guide explains where you can ride on and off the road and includes tips for planning your ride and combining cycling with public transport or car travel. For more information visit the [Transport Victoria website](#)

Off-street and recreational riding

Places to ride away from motorised traffic include shared paths, rail trails and other off-road trails. You may also ride on footpaths when riding with young children (12 or under).

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Shared paths

- Many paths in urban areas are signed as shared paths for walking and bike riding. They are often around parks, waterways and foreshores.
- Your local council may have bike maps showing shared paths in your area. Some are also available on the Transport Victoria web site.
- Keep left on shared paths and give way to people walking. Slow down and use your bell or call out to let people know that you are passing.

Rail trails

- Victoria has 45 rail trails, which are old railway lines now used as shared paths.
- Rail trails are great for off-road recreational riding and some around Melbourne and regional areas also help you get around town.
Find out more about Victoria's rail trails at [Rail Trails Australia](#) or [Ride High Country](#)

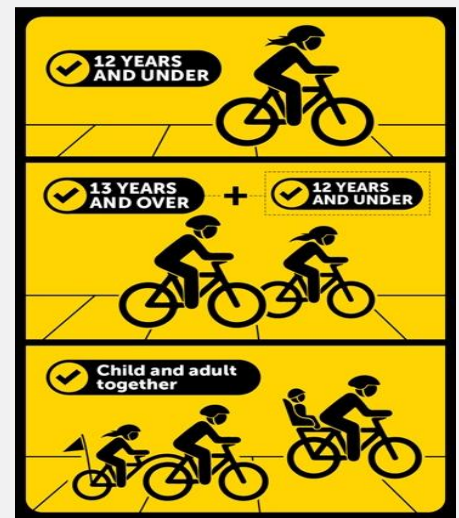
Off-road trails

- Many tracks and trails in nature reserves and state parks around Victoria are great for riding. Bike access varies depending on the location or the type of trail. There are many good websites to assist:
- [Parks Victoria](#) for information on where you can ride, including [mountain biking trails](#).
- [Visit Victoria](#) – bike tourism information including bike hire and experiences.

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Footpaths

- You may only ride on a footpath if you are 12 years and under, if you're riding with a child aged 12 years and under, or if you have a medical exemption.
- Keep left on footpaths and give way to people walking.
- Dismount to cross the road at intersections



On-street riding - bike infrastructure

Even when you ride on off-road trails, you may still need to ride on the road at times. This section explains on-street bike facilities.

Bike lanes

- Bike lanes provide space on roads for bikes to ride out of the main traffic lane. Line markings and bike symbols identify them as spaces for bikes.
- Bike riders must use bike lanes unless it is not practical to do so.

Separated cycleway

- Some on-street bike lanes are fully separated and protected from motorised traffic by raised curbs, bollards or car parking spaces.

Bike box

- Some signalised intersections include dedicated space for bikes to wait at traffic lights. This space – a painted box with a bike symbol inside it – is called a bike box.
- Bike riders may move to the front of the lane to wait in the bike box ahead of other vehicles, which helps riders be seen. However, if a large truck or bus is at

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the front of a lane it is safer to wait behind the vehicle to avoid being in the driver's blind spot.

Sharrows

- A “share lane” marking (a bike symbol with two arrows or chevrons) shows that bike riders should ride in the main traffic lane.
- These markings are often found before roundabouts, where bike lanes end, or on narrow local streets.
- They help remind drivers that people on bikes may need to ride in the middle of the lane.



Sharrows

Even where there are no bike lanes or road markings, bikes are allowed on most roads. The only exceptions are where signs say bikes are not permitted, such as on urban freeways.

Planning your ride

If you are riding somewhere new, plan your route using streets or paths you feel comfortable on.

Tips for choosing a good route:

- Choose quieter, lower-speed streets instead of busy main roads.
- A slightly longer route may be easier and safer if it avoids heavy traffic.
- Use bike lanes and off-road paths where they are available.
- Ask someone who rides for advice on the best routes.
- If you don't feel comfortable crossing a busy road or intersection, you can walk your bike across.
- In areas with lots of bike riders, follow popular bike routes, as they are often safer and easier to ride on.

Maps and tools to help you find your way

There are many online apps and websites to help plan your ride. These are just a few:

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- Google maps – shows bike route options when you select 'bicycle' as your transport mode. Be aware that it may not include all local routes. Use the street view function to check the suggested route before you start riding, as suggested routes are not always appropriate (Google sometimes recommends higher speed arterial roads).
- Open Street Maps – shows all bicycle infrastructure
- Melway on line – shows off street paths and tracks
- Council bike maps – many metropolitan councils and some regional towns have bike maps of their local area. That can be accessed through the Transport Victoria Bicycle and walking route maps
- Bicycle Network has more tips on planning your ride on this How to plan a bike route page.
- Public transport can help you ride further by taking you to the start of a ride, extending your trip, or getting you home afterwards, and you can often take your bike on trains or use secure station bike parking (Parkiteer). More information is available on the Transport Vic journey planner website

Carrying your bike in/on the car

There are several ways to carry bikes in/on a car, depending on your vehicle and how many bikes you have:

- **Inside the car:** A bike can often fit in the boot on its side, especially if the back seats fold down. You may need to remove the bike front wheel. A bike shop or experienced rider can show you how to do this.
- **Tow bar bike rack:** A rack fitted to the back of the car can carry one or more bikes (sometimes up to six, depending on the rack). Make sure your number plate is still visible from 20 metres. If not, you will need a bike rack number plate.
- **Roof racks:** Some cars can carry bikes on the roof using special racks, usually with the front bike wheel removed. Make sure you can safely lift the bikes onto the roof before considering this option.

Ride with others – for fun, skills and support

There are many ways to connect with other people on a bike and develop your riding skills. Here are a few suggestions:

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- Organise to ride with friends. It's more fun and a great way to share and learn riding know-how.
- Many local councils run bike riding programs, workshops and events. Check your council website to see what's happening in your area.
- Take part in local bike events. Look for rides that are a good distance for your level of fitness and experience. Or work up to a bigger event like Bicycle Network's [Around the Bay](#), which has a variety of riding distances to suit families through to strong, confident riders.
- Find out if your local area or workplace has a [Bicycle Users Group \(BUG\)](#), usually a volunteer group who support others to ride in the local area or to a workplace.
- If you have school-aged children, ride to school with them until they are ready to ride on their own. Our ***Riding with Children*** guide includes more advice on supporting young people to ride safely on their own.
- Encourage your children's school to run [Bike Ed](#).
- Look for a bike-friendly Facebook group in your local area for suggestions on where to ride locally.

More information

These organisations have more resources for learning to ride, bike maintenance, events and support.

- [Bicycle Network](#) – member-based organisation, hosts events, services and support.
- [AusCycling](#) – member-based organisation for track, road, BMX, mountain bike riding and recreational riding. Find a bike, bmx, road and track [club](#) near you.
- [We Ride Australia](#) – bicycle advocacy organisation.
- [Good Cycles](#) -tips and advice