

Randonee – Exploring the Coffs Coast March 24 to 28, 2019

A band of 12 cyclists gathered at the Ocean View Hotel, Urunga for pre dinner drinks on Sunday 24 March at the start of our fantastic 4 day cycling holiday on the Coffs Coast. We moved over to the bowling club for dinner, which took longer to arrive than we anticipated. It was worth the wait and we retired to the Reflections Holiday Park for the night. Some of us were in very comfortable cabins with air conditioning and fans and others had brought their own caravans.

Day 1 Urunga to Bellingen loop 47 kms

Every day we enjoyed the lush hilly green scenery of the hinterland and we appreciated why it is favoured as a home base for celebrities. With Paul in the lead and Marshall as sweep, we set off for Bellingen. For cyclists, it was hard riding and the first day tested us all, not helped by the 36 deg temperature, and 80% humidity. We started by walking across the bridge over the Kalang River as the bridge was under repair. En route to Bellingen some of us walked up the hills and we arrived in town in desperate need of refreshment. Erika, Sue's friend from Cycle Queensland, who lives in Bellingen, joined us for coffee. What a classy place – we saw George Negus (celebrated journalist) on the street and he commented "You look too fit for me"! None of us felt fit for the return ride. A shocking road surface along a minor road but we made it. Carol (on electric bike) and Kerry (on push bike) in the lead and those two even managed to find extra breath to chat. Thanks to Marshall, from the tailenders, as sweep he was patient.

Day 2 Urunga to Coffs Harbour 68 kms

Another hilly day northwards along the Old Pacific Highway with good road surface and shoulder, with Paul in the lead again. There was a welcome half-way coffee stop and rest at the very friendly Bonville service station. Best of all if you pay for one coffee you get the second one free (thanks Carol). From Boambee we followed a dedicated bike track along the Pacific Highway and into town. We gathered in a cafe by the harbour, where Sue met up with her cousin. On the wharf we saw the day's catch of mackerel being loaded into tubs. Then it was back the same way to our Holiday Park, and happy hour by the BBQ.

Day 3 Urunga to Nambucca Heads 48 kms

A cooler day and a pleasant ride southwards to Nambucca where we admired the rock art along the break wall. Opinion was divided as whether it is classy or trash, for me I liked the messages and pictures. Return the same way along the old Pacific Highway and downhill via Hungry Head and home.

As some of us were leaving the next day we had a BBQ at the caravan park that night. Paul and Kerry stepped up as chefs and did a great job. We enjoyed delicious sausages, rissoles and salads, and of course lots of jokes from John and Steve.

Account by Sue Hunt (Steve and I left on morning of Day 4)

Day 4 Urunga to Myleston 35kms

Last day was an easy ride to Myleston, flat all the way following the water to the coffee shop where we relaxed for coffee looking over the water and scenery.

On the return journey we followed the Yellow Brick Road that followed the water around Raleigh and farmland. As we were riding over the newly tarred section, Kerry's rear derailleur broke. Trying to fix it wasn't successful and seeing it was all flat, Peter gave her a push along back to the caravan park. As we got closer to the park, Graeme raced back to get his car, to give her a lift but Kerry was almost back and decided to walk the last bit with Peter.

Just like to thank you all who came along. It was a good few days' riding. Unfortunately, you just can't get away from hills, it's what cycling is all about.

Thanks to Sue Hunt for the report

Cheers all

Paul Murray