

Team Mt Beauty, Cup Weekend



Team Mt Beauty (Bronwyn Manifold - Dave Ward's partner, Jo Southwell - Paul's wife, and Gayle Ilievski - our great cycling buddy) spent a fabulous week at Mt Beauty. While MSR fanged around Corryong and surrounds, we did our best to offset your carbon emissions. By road and mountain bike, we explored the delights of the Kiewa Valley and surrounds.

We woke each morning to a symphony of birdsong, and enjoyed breakfast on the balcony with the reliable company of a King Parrot or two, before heading out on our trusty treadlies. Tired muscles were soothed each day by a dip in the pool at our house on the hill. And every day, we had an encounter with various wildlife.

On Saturday, we challenged ourselves with the thrills and spills of the Big Hill Mountain Bike Park, a veritable cornucopia of 50 km of single tracks to suit all levels. Unfortunately, we ventured unknowingly onto trails beyond our skill level, resulting in Bronwyn making like Brer Rabbit and tumbling into a briar patch. Undeterred, we plugged onward and upward along single tracks, returning FAST along the Survey Trail, one of “The Dirty Dozen”, a collection of 12 iconic mountain bike trails located across North East Victoria. I led, flying over a large brown “stick”, which animated to reveal itself as a very cranky King Brown Snake, as Gayle took rapid (and effective) evasive action.

Sunday was our highlight day with a combination ride: Bronwyn and I took on the 33km climb to Falls Creek on our road bikes - a piece of proverbial on your road bikes, significantly more challenging under pedal power - but among Victoria’s peaks, Falls is a definite favourite. Gayle drove the van up, with all three mountain bikes, so when Bron and I reached the village, we loaded the road bikes and switched to mountain bikes.

Over to Rocky Valley Dam, and then along a magnificent circuit trail via two mountain cattlemen’s huts. Snow on the hillsides under a cloudless sky was too much for Bronwyn to resist, as she demonstrated her prowess with cross country skiing - without skis! She also did some opportunistic research, consulting with two young men about the techniques of building an igloo. We returned home for a well earned swim - and a pool rescue of a honeyeater.

Gayle and I returned to Big Hill on Monday for more challenges, hooking up by chance with members of Team Mt Beauty, who showed us some of their favourite trails - who can resist Secret Track, Banarama or Weekend at Bernie’s, busting out at Cranky Charlie’s?!

On Cup Day, Bron and Gayle headed off to Wodonga by car to meet up with David, and farewell Gayle on the VLine back to Melbourne. I headed out along the beautiful Redbank Road on the “Princess”, enjoying the wedge tailed eagles soaring overhead.

More rides over the next few days, once “the boys” joined us - Cliff, Ian, Dave and Paul adding a different dimension to our holiday dynamic in our little house on the hill. Wednesday was so wet (72mm at Falls Creek) that we conceded riding defeat and headed over Tawonga Gap by car to Bright for lunch, then back for a relaxed viewing of “TinTin”.

We all enjoyed Redbank Road on Thursday - the boys just went a little bit further, over the hills and far away. Bronwyn and I returned home just as the heavens opened, having rescued a turtle crossing the road on our return journey.

And on the final day, while bushwalking very early, I had an encounter with a large deer buck, who grunted his displeasure at my presence, before bounding off into his domain.

All in all, it was another fabulous week in the beautiful mountains, doing what we love, with great friends.

Jo Southwell