

THE RIDE GUIDE:

A TOURISM OPERATORS GUIDE TO BECOMING
A MOUNTAIN BIKE FRIENDLY BUSINESS



Destination
Southern NSW

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2. Mountain biking – so what's the big deal?
3. Who are mountain bikers?
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7. The NSW South Coast mountain biking landscape
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SECTION 1

WELCOME TO THE 'RIDE GUIDE'

Mountain Biking. Going fast down a dirt track on two wheels. Sounds like a simple concept right? If you're a rider, there's a lot more to it. Finding the best destinations close or far from home, getting a group of friends or family together to ride, mapping out the trails, finding a place to stay, there's a lot that goes into the search for the perfect ride. Much like the skiers and surfers before them, mountain biking has developed a culture and following that has turned it into one of Australia's highest growth industries and one which the Tourism industry has only recently seriously started tapping into.

With this 'new boom' in the development of regional trail infrastructure and the growing following the trails are achieving, a guide for helping tourism operators setup and position themselves for this market was born.

The guide aims to help individuals and businesses make clever choices around the opportunities for welcoming mountain bikers to your destination, and offering services which match the needs of this growing market. Mountain Biking (MTB) is an exciting sport and industry and its growth

presents many positive opportunities to tap into the growing mountain biking audience and it grows its share of the NSW visitor economy.

The content in this guide has been written by keen mountain bikers who have experience in destination development and marketing, so of course we are a little biased, but we know that one of the best ways to enjoy the NSW natural environment and trails is by bike. Mountain biking is a super fun sport, and in Australia riders are increasingly spoiled for choice, with trails for all abilities right across the country.

This idea for this guide originally was born from the development of the three new MTB areas on the NSW South Coast – Mogo Trails (mogo/ Batemans Bay), Narooma Mountain Bike Trails and Gravity Eden.

WHO'S BEHIND THE RIDE GUIDE?



The initiative for the Ride Guide and Ride Hub was supported and led by Destination Southern NSW. Their primary role is to coordinate tourism-related strategies and projects that promote growth across the region. They identified the investment into mountain biking across our region as a key area for growth, particularly in the South Coast of NSW and supported the project through industry capacity building and education.

They are one of seven Destination Networks in regional NSW, established by the NSW Government, to improve regional stakeholder engagement and better support the visitor economy of NSW.

Find out more online here: dsnsw.com.au/



The team at Threesides Marketing love a ride. For this project they brought together a group of tourism and adventuring brains to share their knowledge of tourism and biking to create what has become the Ride guide. Threesides works across the Canberra Region and Regional NSW with tourism destinations, local councils and tourism operators on marketing, capacity building and product development projects. All of the content in this guide has been written before, during or after a ride so if there's some dirty marks on the pages, please excuse us.

Find out more online here: threesides.com.au

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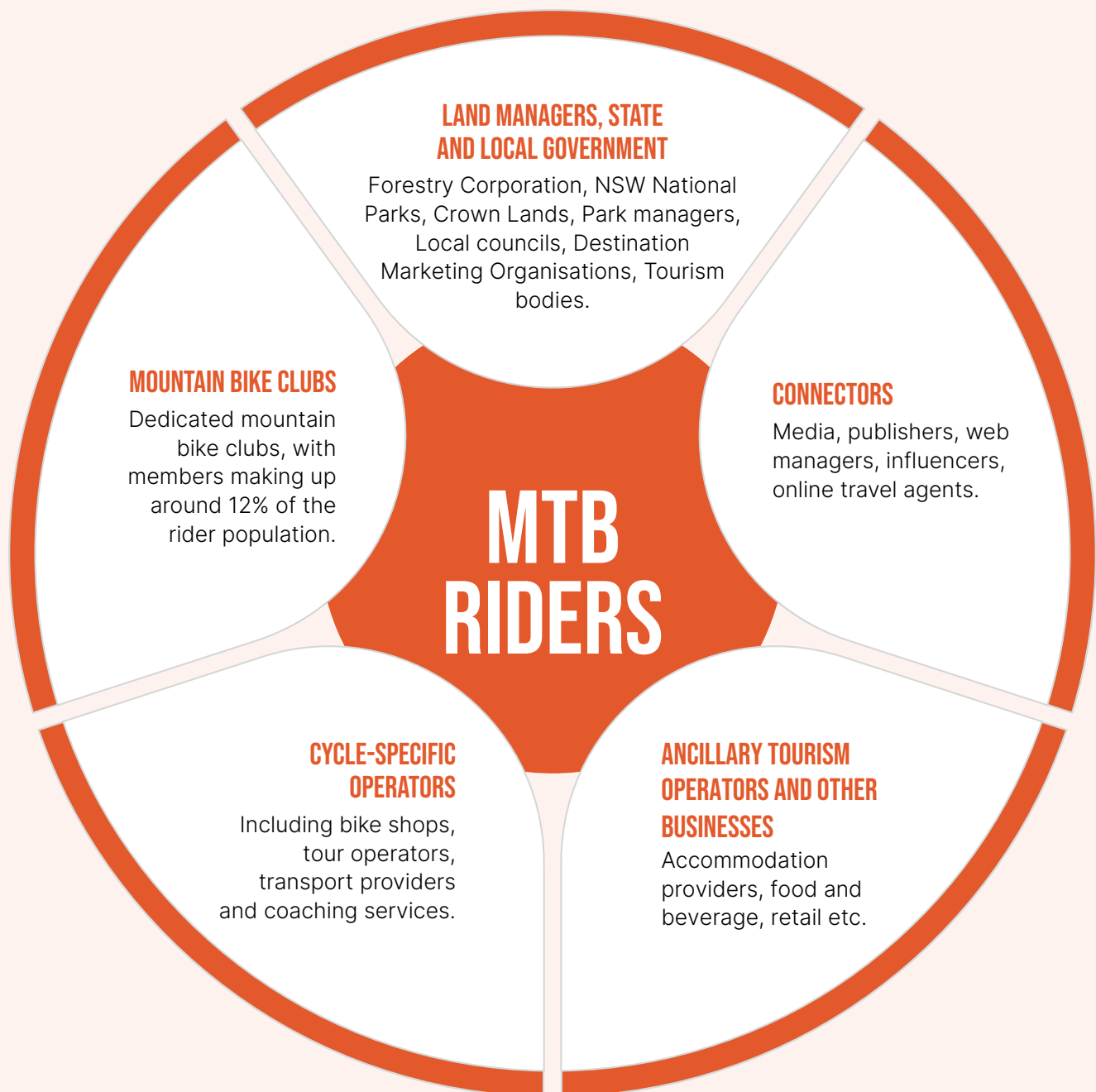
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THE STAKEHOLDERS – WHO’S INVOLVED?

Like any sport/recreational activity, there’s a whole range of players in the industry who could potentially help you develop, build and market your product. These are outlined below.

With mountain bike riders connecting all of these stakeholders, key touchpoints include:



SECTION 2

MOUNTAIN BIKING – SO WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL?

The popularity of mountain biking in Australia, along with mountain bike holidays and the development of dedicated mountain bike areas, continues to grow on a significant scale. Mountain biking is a fun and adventurous way to explore nature and the trails on two wheels, and appeals to a broad range of age groups.

Mountain biking is one of the fastest growing sports in Australia and the development of these local trail networks makes this the prime time to get involved and attract new visitors to your business.



HERE'S SOME NUMBERS:



341,900

mountain bike participants in Australia who spend \$630.8 million on the activity annually.



177,000

Of this 177,000 went mountain biking on a trip in the past 12 months.



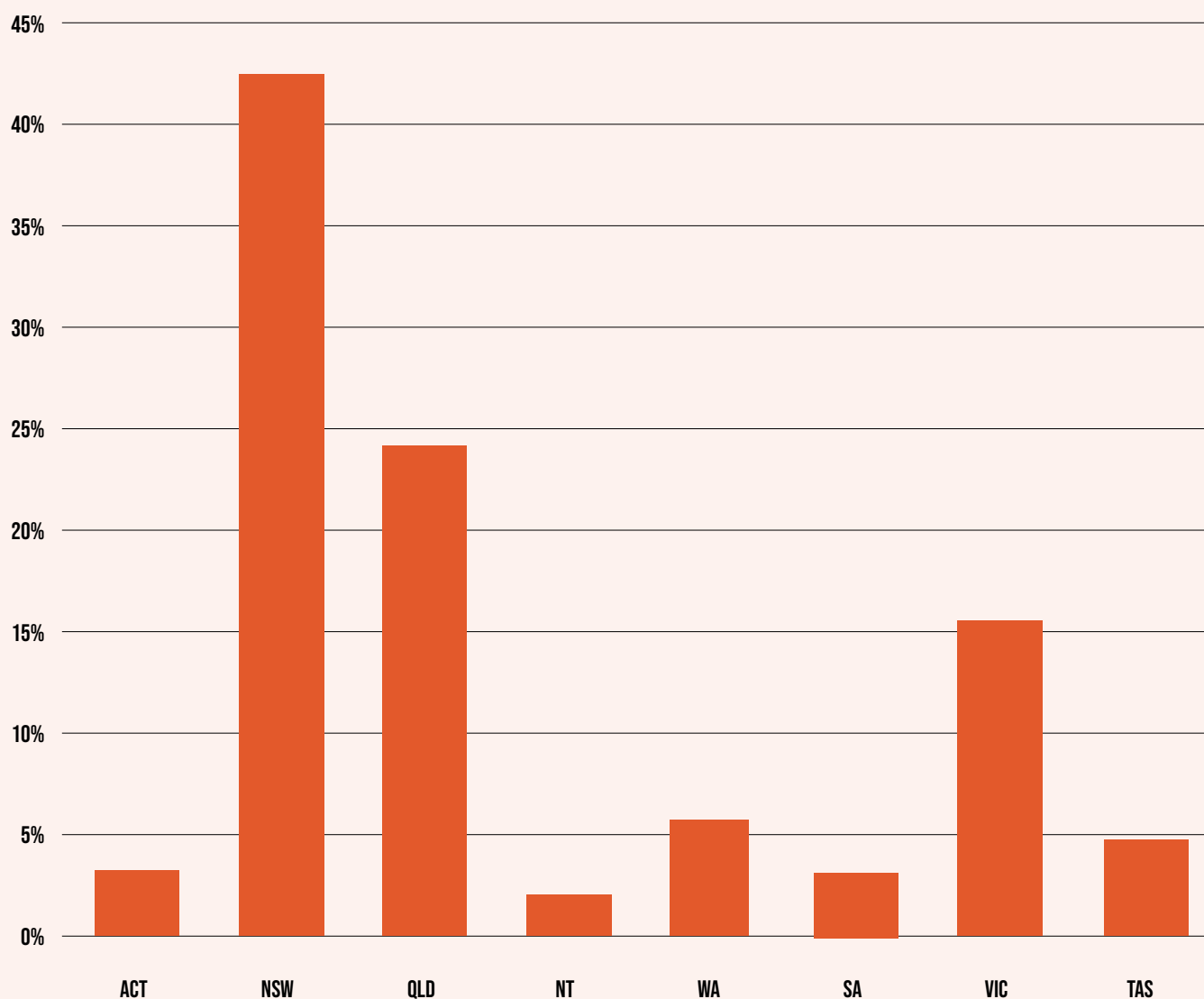
4.3 MILLION

people find mountain biking appealing (29% of adults) – including 870,000 who find it very appealing



NSW

According to a AUS Cycling Mountain Bike Australia study*, NSW has the greatest percentage of mountain bikers, with 30-59 year-olds being the biggest demographic



*AUS CYCLING: MOUNTAIN BIKING IN AUSTRALIA: AN ECONOMIC AND PARTICIPATION ANALYSIS (2019)







SO, WHAT EXACTLY IS MOUNTAIN BIKING (MTB)?

Mountain biking can be defined as “Riding a mountain bike/bicycle off-road, often on purpose-built single tracks and sometimes multi-use trails.”

Trail types accommodate different styles of riding and follow a standard Australian grading system. At trail centres, riders will encounter a variety of fun features (“berms”, “drops”, “jumps”, “skinnies”) designed to increase the adventure and test balance and skill. Types and difficulty of features will differ depending on the grade of the trail.

Grading system:

	Easy (Appropriate for less experienced riders)
	More Difficult (Intermediate riders)
	Very Difficult (Advanced riders)
	Extremely Difficult (Very Advanced riders)

STYLES OF RIDING:



Gravity/enduro

A form of mountain bike racing that is broken up into timed stages that are mostly (if not completely) downhill. Transfer/climbing stages are not timed, but racers could be required to meet a cut-off. Events can vary in length and difficulty.



Downhill

Downhill (also referred to as DH) is a form of gravity-fed mountain biking where there is little to no uphill riding involved. Downhill trails are accessed by chair lifts or a shuttle.



Park

An area involving skills sections, jumps and sometimes a pump track – a circuit of rollers, banked turns and features.



Cross country

Cross country (also referred to simply as XC) is a form of mountain biking where covering distance is emphasised over technicality. Cross country does not literally mean “across country.”

SECTION 4

WHO ARE MOUNTAIN BIKERS?

Mountain biking attracts a range of ages, abilities and riding styles.

SO, WHO ARE MOUNTAIN BIKERS - WHAT MAKES THEM DIFFERENT AS A TARGET MARKET?



Biggest share between the ages of 25-59.



Participate frequently and over the long term.



Relatively affluent with high household incomes and generally well educated.



44% travel monthly to ride.
1-4 trips per year for 1-2 days or 3+ extended stays.
Travel up to 4 hrs to ride.



Group make up varies depending on type of riding and can be couples, groups of friends and/or family.

THE MOUNTAIN BIKE CULTURE

Just like surfing has its own culture, mountain biking has its own micro culture too. If you're in the know, you just need to take a look at a mountain biker's style of bike, their clothes or their helmet to have a good idea of the style of mountain biking they do. And yes, there are different styles of riding, just like there are different styles of surfing or paddling. Maybe your visitors will be lycra-clad "cross-country" keen beans, or maybe they'll be more extreme "gravity" experts - wearing baggy shorts and full-face helmets.

KNOW YOUR 'SKINNIES' FROM YOUR 'BAGGIES'!

Skinnies – an elevated, typically narrow wooden feature which requires great skills to ride.

Baggies – loose fitting mountain bike shorts, generally worn by gravity and enduro riders.

Having the right kit forms part of a mountain biker's identity and also helps keep riders safe, comfortable and enjoying their riding. The bike is the centre of the sport, and all bikes are definitely not created equal. There are many brands on the market and here's some examples below:

Hard tail

Only has suspension at the front- typically less expensive than full suspension.



Full suspension

Suspension at front and rear of the bike. Typically used for more technical/advanced riding or rough terrain.



Categories also exist depending on the style of riding:

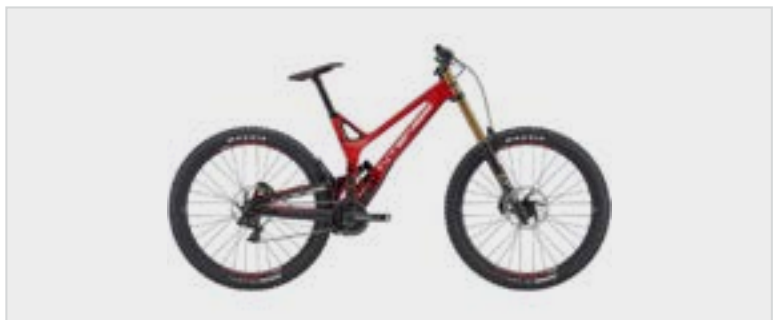
All Mountain and Enduro

Typically full suspension with lots of bounce for more challenging terrain.



Downhill

The most suspension, designed to absorb it all up while heading downhill FAST.



Cross-Country (XC)

May be hardtail or full suspension, designed to climb fast.



Check out one of Australia's most popular MTB brands - TREK



THE VALUE OF MOUNTAIN BIKES

Mountain bikes are no small investment. Sure, you can pick up a bike for a few hundred dollars, but some people will also spend over \$10,000 on a bike... It's an investment and the rider's pride and joy! This needs to be considered when accommodating mountain bikers on holiday, as they will want to factor in how their bike is stored when they're not out riding it.

SECURING YOUR INVESTMENT

Would you leave these items strapped to the outside of your car on the street overnight, unattended? Your favourite set of golf clubs? The wife's diamond jewellery? Your favourite wall art or vinyl collection?

Nope? Well, bikes are both expensive and a mountain biker's pride and joy. Riders need somewhere safe to store their bikes when they're not out riding! ... take into consideration, this might include muddy tyres on the carpet of your hotel room, or an impromptu bike wash in the shower... unless there are catered options of course.

SECTION 4

CREATING A THRIVING MOUNTAIN BIKE DESTINATION

Although great riding is the basis for a mountain bike destination, the experience and offering needs to be so much greater than this.

Think trails, mountain bike friendly accommodation, rider friendly food and beverage, and experiences for the mountain bikers and/or their families beyond riding.

It takes a village to build the ideal destination! The trails are just the beginning. It's up to the businesses on the ground to recognise that it's your offering that will bring a must-visit destination together – a rider friendly town will make people come back again and again. So, what exactly does this look like?

AN IDEAL DESTINATION WILL TICK ALL THE BOXES

	Volume of trails (80-100km+)		Accommodation and retail
	Variety of trails		Food and beverage
	Trails of varying difficulty - need challenging riding		Different riding experiences - can't be more of the same
	Scenery		Other experiences - more than just biking
	Culture		

SO, YOU HAVE THE EPIC TRAILS - WHAT ARE THE OTHER MOUNTAIN BIKE SPECIFIC NEEDS?

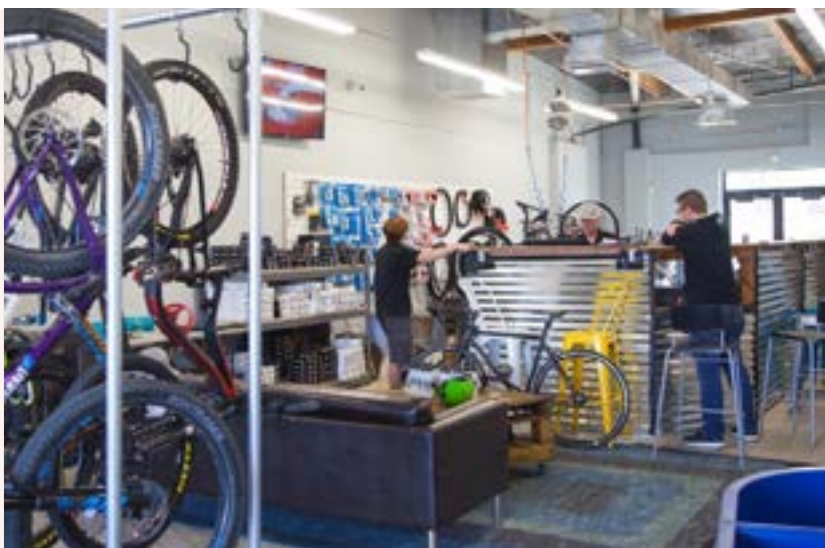
Trailhead facilities

These may include parking, access to drinking water, trail signage/a map of the network, tools.



MTB shop, mechanic, rental

Somewhere to buy MTB gear, seek mechanical support or for riders arriving without bikes (this could be because they've flown in) – to rent bikes.



MTB shuttle and tour services

Guided tours or, for networks where shuttles are appropriate, a vehicle shuttle service for riders and their bikes between the bottom and top of the trail.



Food and beverage options

Think good quality pizza, pasta, craft beer – mountain bikers tend to enjoy a few chilled “frothies” after a big day riding.



Secure bike storage

Remember, bikes are valuable and prized possessions!



Bike wash

A clean bike is a fast bike (and a happy hotel room carpet!). Pressure washers are typically used for bike cleaning, although this needs to be carefully done so as not to damage the bike and its bearings.



Bike parking

Including lockable options.



Events

Mountain bike events may be single stage, morning or day races, or longer weekend or multi-day stage races.



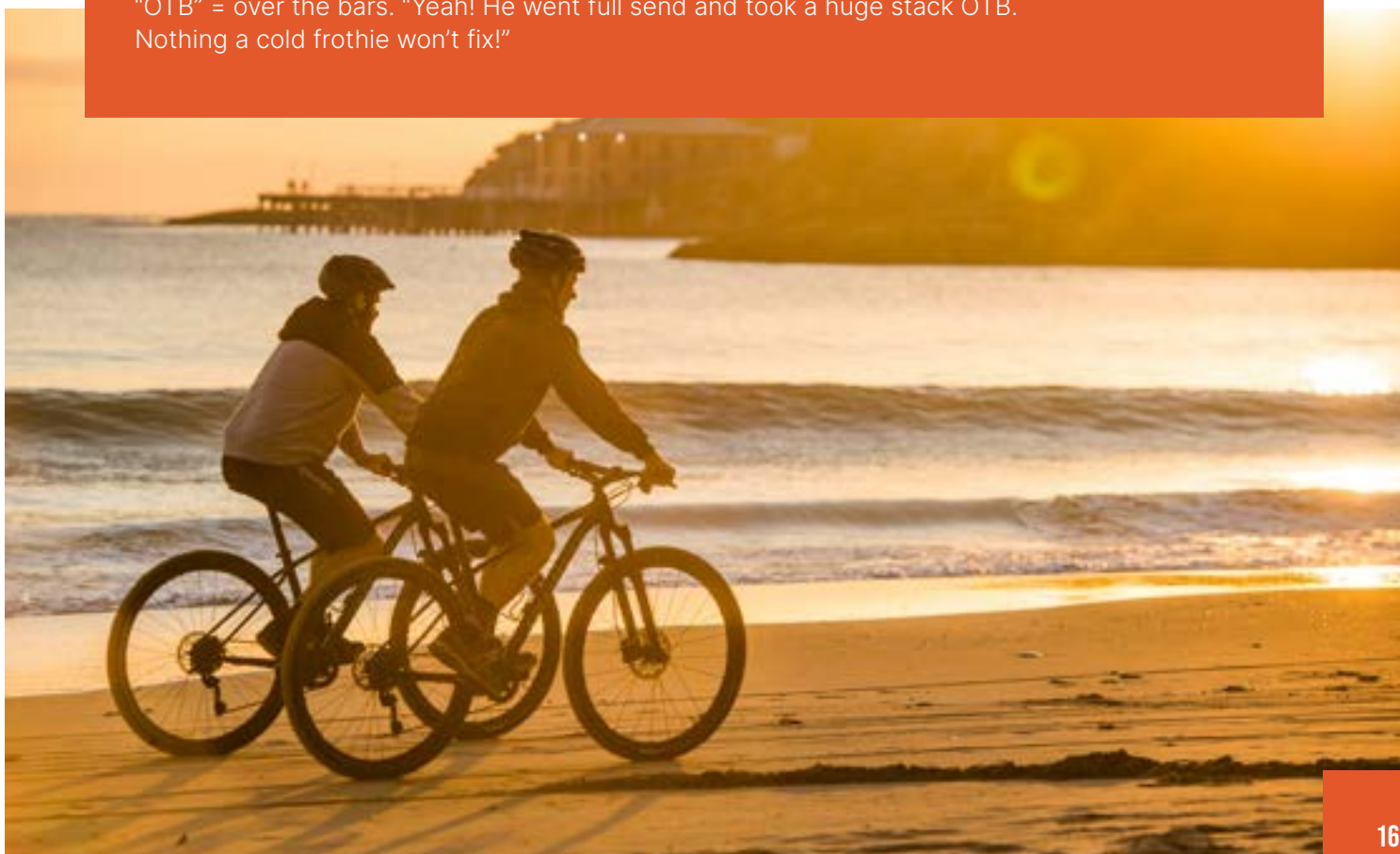
Rider friendly locals/culture

Mountain bikers are a friendly bunch and love to visit rider friendly spots.



LEARN THE LINGO

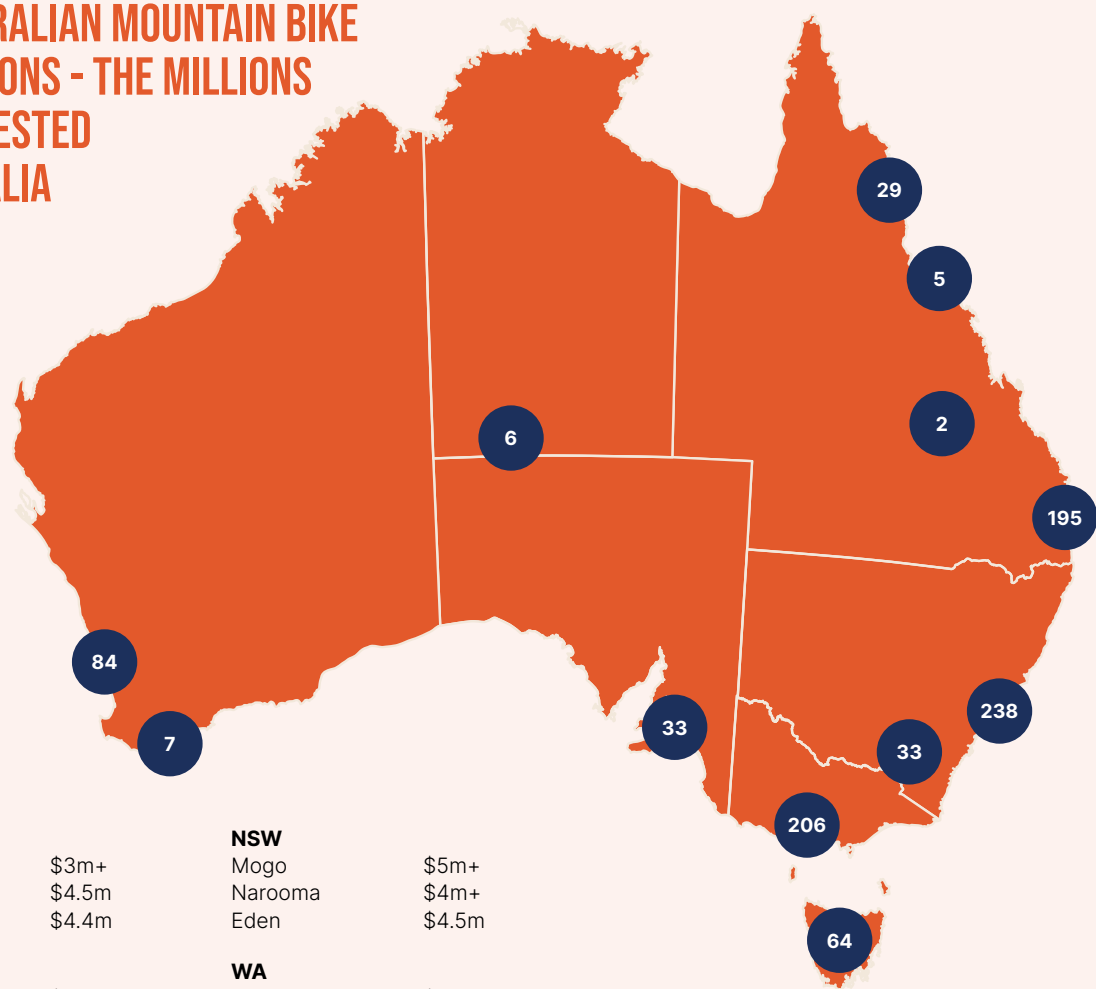
"OTB" = over the bars. "Yeah! He went full send and took a huge stack OTB.
Nothing a cold frothie won't fix!"



SECTION 5

THE GROWING AUSTRALIAN MTB TRAIL NETWORK

TOP AUSTRALIAN MOUNTAIN BIKE DESTINATIONS - THE MILLIONS BEING INVESTED IN AUSTRALIA



TAS

Derby Tas	\$3m+
St Helens	\$4.5m
George Tn	\$4.4m

QLD

Mackay	\$10m+
Cairns	\$ongoing

VIC

Warburton	\$10m
Omeo	\$4.5m

ACT

Stromlo	\$ongoing
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Private

Thredbo, Buller, Falls, Maydena, Spicers

NSW

Mogo	\$5m+
Narooma	\$4m+
Eden	\$4.5m

WA

Collie	\$10m
Dwellinup	\$3.5m


SA

Melrose	\$2.5m
Eagle Park	\$ongoing

NT

Red Centre	\$10m
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KEY

 Number of Trails

As at 2024

SECTION 6

SO, YOU WANT TO BUILD A MOUNTAIN BIKE-READY BUSINESS?

WHAT DOES BEING MOUNTAIN BIKE-READY REALLY MEAN?

Being “Bike ready” in tourism means you:

- know
- appreciate
- value
- invest in
- attract
- and want to successfully connect with the mountain bike visitor.

Being bike-ready means setting up your business to deliver on the needs of mountain bikers. It means ensuring riders have a positive, memorable experience that they want to return to and share with their mates – they’ll be planning their next visit before they’ve even left.

Being a bike friendly business can include the following considerations, dependent on the type of provider you are.

2. Criteria
Businesses must tick at least 5 of the following proof points to support their declaration. While only 5 are required for a successful submission, business may tick as many of the following statements that apply to their business:

Knowledge and welcome – demonstrate your understanding of the needs of cyclists

- ☐ Front of house staff are aware of the needs of cyclists and can confidently assist cycle tourists with information or help
- ☐ Front of house staff are aware of the local cycling trails
- ☐ We stock books and brochures outlining trails
- ☐ Staff/owners are keen cyclists
- ☐ We have undertaken or have a willingness to undertake training/attend cycle friendly workshops

Water Refills

- ☐ Water bottles can be filled up in guest rooms
- ☐ Staff will fill water bottles upon request
- ☐ Water jug is supplied for self-service
- ☐ Tap that is accessible and permitted for cyclists to self-service

Storage

- ☐ We supply bike racks out of the front of the building
- ☐ We supply bike hooks to hang bikes safely
- ☐ We supply floor mats for customers to store their bikes in their rooms
- ☐ We offer a locked room for bike storage
- ☐ We have a secure garage available for bike storage

Repair and maintenance

- ☐ We have a bicycle repair kit (*minimum items are required, see below)
- ☐ We have extra tools available such as cable cutters, spare cables etc.
- ☐ We have a complimentary, dedicated self-service area
- ☐ We have a member of staff that can provide limited mechanical assistance
- ☐ We employ a paid bike mechanic
- ☐ We offer a tap and hose outside that can be used for bike washing
- ☐ We offer a dedicated cleaning area for bikes

The Tourism Industry Council Tasmania started a great program to accredit Bike Friendly Businesses in their state.

Check out their resources for some great pointers on what you can do to become more bike friendly.

[DOWNLOAD THE RESOURCE PACK](#)





QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONSIDERING YOUR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY:

1

Are you interested in growing a new market for your business?

2

Does the target market match your product?

3

What infrastructure upgrades do you need to undertake to meet the needs of the market?

4

What experience development steps do you need to take?

5

How will you promote to and attract the market?

6

Who can you work with locally to maximise your return on investment?

7

What can you measure to work out how successful you are?

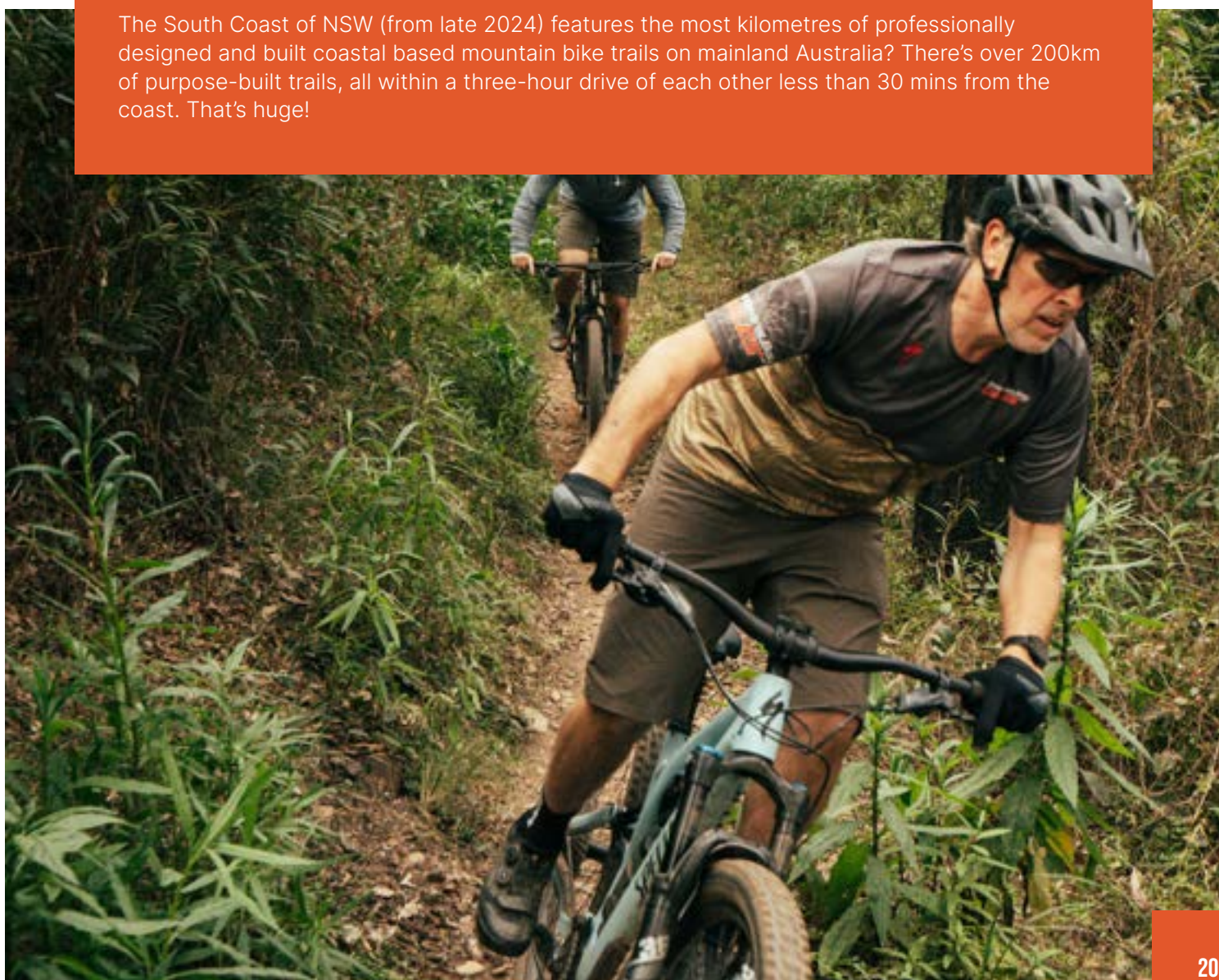
SECTION 7

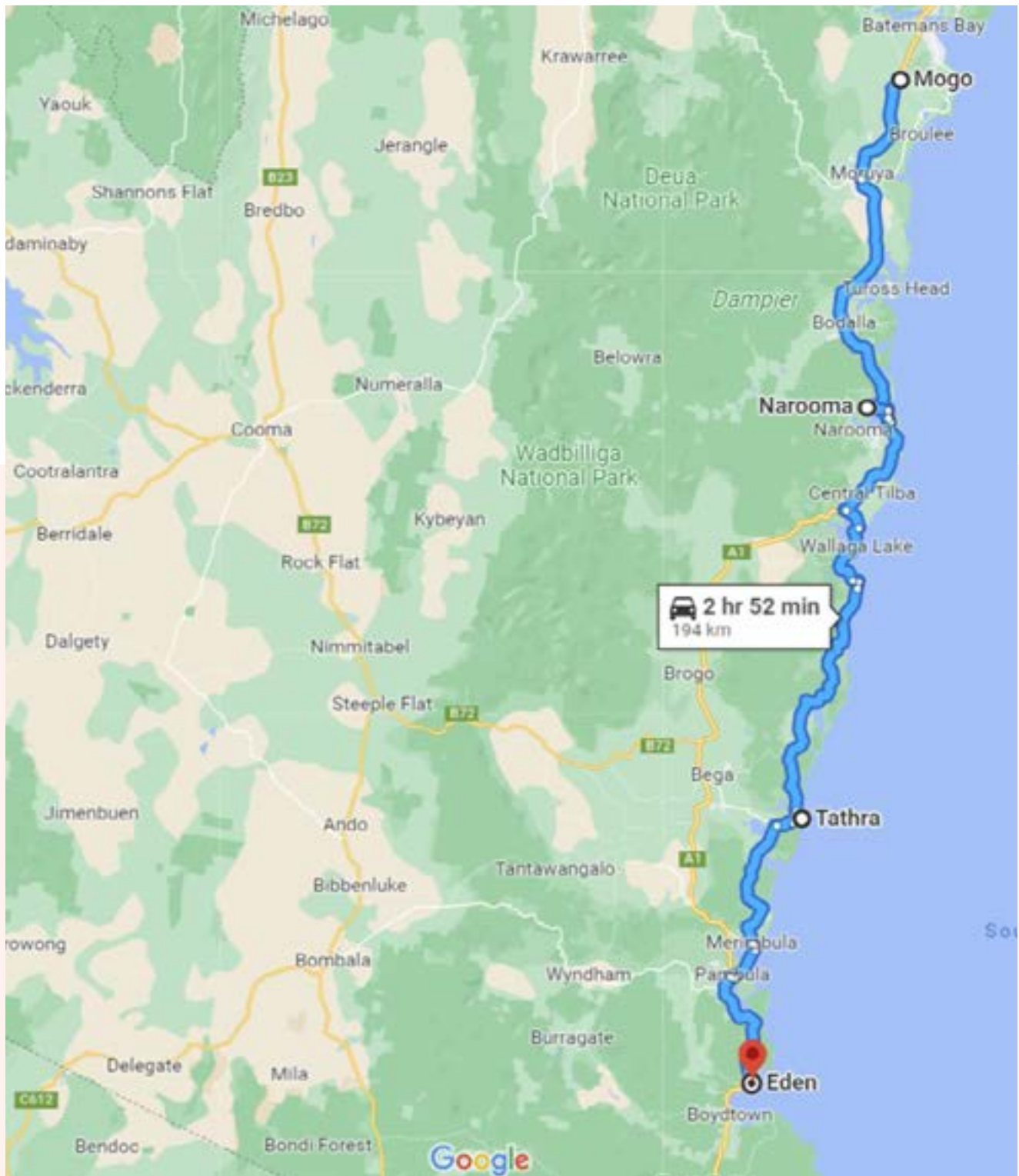
THE NSW SOUTH COAST MOUNTAIN BIKING LANDSCAPE

THE TRAILS

DID YOU KNOW?

The South Coast of NSW (from late 2024) features the most kilometres of professionally designed and built coastal based mountain bike trails on mainland Australia? There's over 200km of purpose-built trails, all within a three-hour drive of each other less than 30 mins from the coast. That's huge!

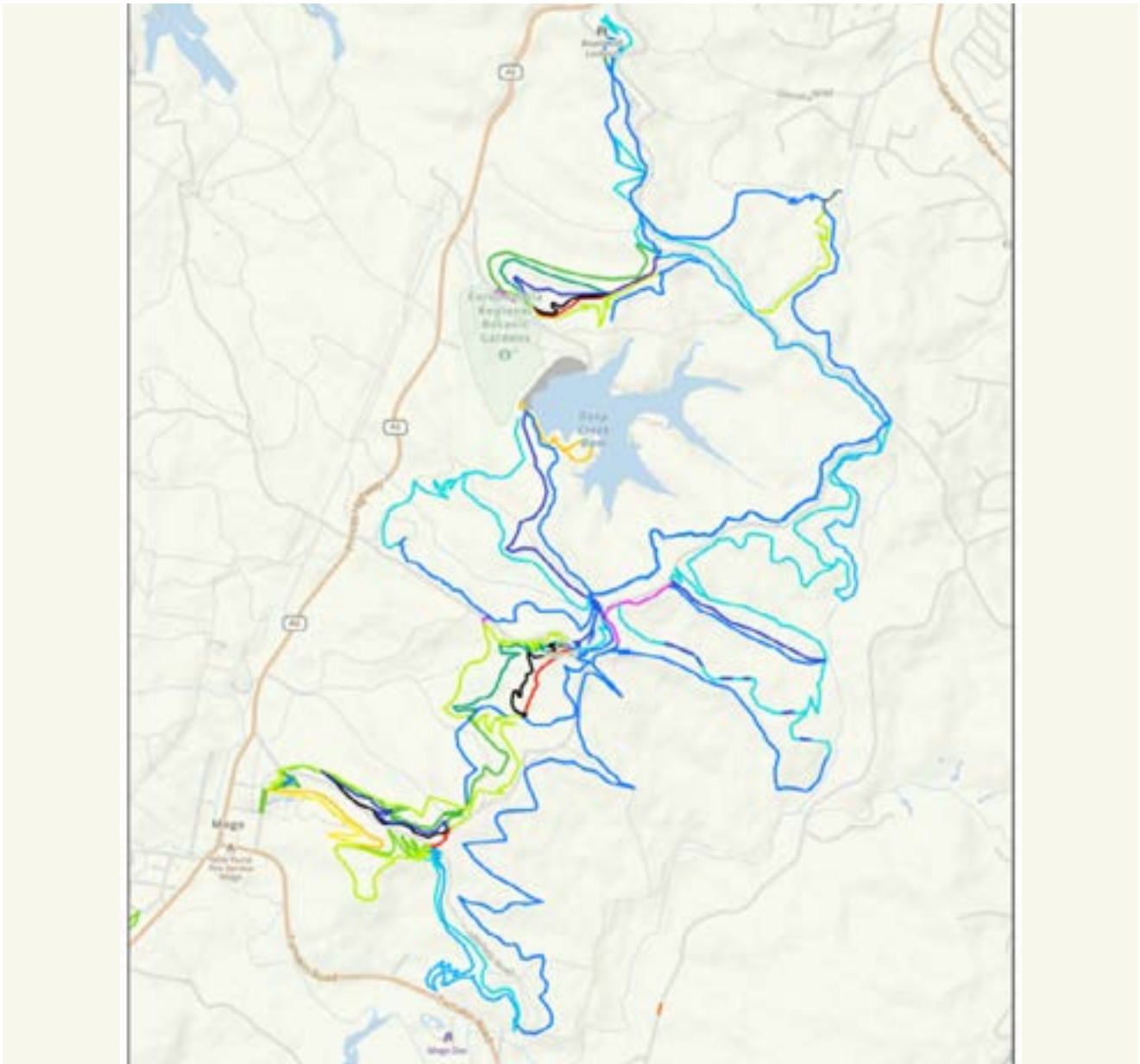




The mountain bike trails are the newest tourist attraction along the NSW South Coast, and are a huge opportunity for growth, so it's worth taking some time to get to understand the trail networks, what mountain biking is all about, and the type of visitors you'll be catering for.

The South Coast NSW mountain biking trails are split between four centres:

- Mogo
- Narooma
- Tathra
- Gravity Eden



MOGO

- 155km of dedicated singletrack – which includes 125km of new trail.
- The \$8-million project was funded by the Australian and NSW Governments' Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund, and the NSW Government's Growing Local Economies Fund, and is projected to attract an additional 45,000 visitors annually.
- Includes 30km of existing trails around Deep Creek Dam, expanding out into Wandara State Forest, where the remaining ~125km of trail are due for completion in 2024.
- Includes a mix of bike park style gravity trails and XC trails to suit experienced mountain bikers, while also providing the infrastructure for beginners and mini-shredders to develop their skills.

Find out more

flowmountainbike.com/post-all/mogo-trails-build-to-kick-off-this-week/
facebook.com/EdenMTBClub



NAROOMA

Find out more



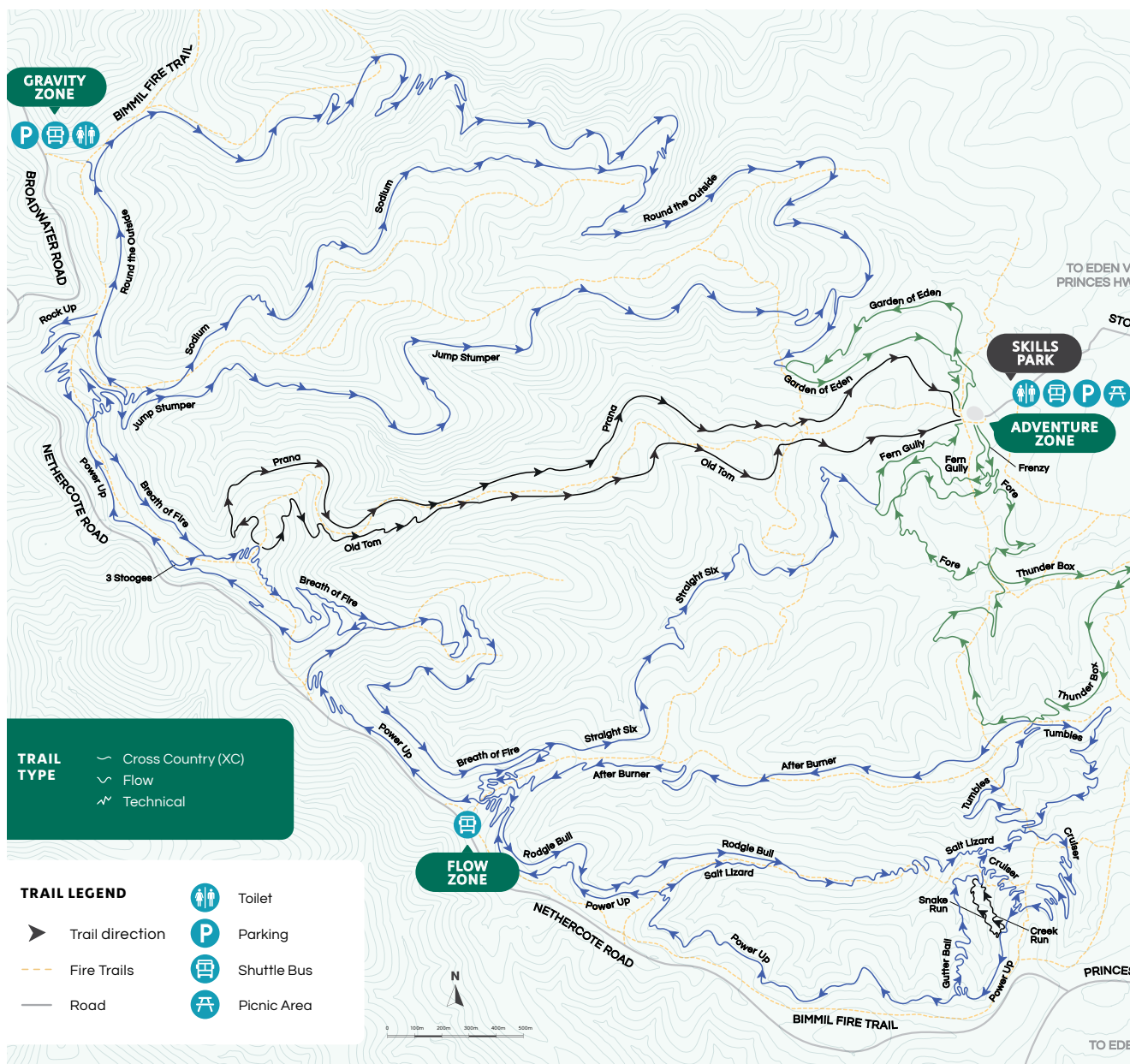
TATHRA

- Featuring around 50km of cross-country trails.
- The “Bundadung” (Koori word for wombat: the “spirit of the forest”) is the birthplace of cross-country mountain biking in Tathra.
- The trail head is located at the Tathra Country Club, 1km north of the Tathra township on the Tathra Bermagui Road.

Find out more

<https://www.tathramtbclub.com/>

<https://www.trailforks.com/region/tathra-12451/>



EDEN

- Gravity Eden is Eden's brand-new mountain bike park, which opened in winter 2023.
- Gravity Eden features 56km+ mountain bike trails, 300m+ elevation, and 20 unique trails.
- Eden Mountain Bike Hub Project is jointly funded by the Australian and NSW Governments under the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund.
- Riders can hit the trails with over 56km of premium, machine-built singletrack built by specialist mountain bike trail experts, Contour Works. Ride summit to sea from a peak elevation of 300m, from the winding trails of Nullica Forest to the shores of magnificent Twofold Bay.

Find out more

gravityeden.com.au



A. STROMLO FOREST PARK, CANBERRA, ACT

- 2007 – Government-funded development built out of the ashes of the Canberra bushfires.
- Home to over 100km of MTB trails at the adventure centre catering for all levels. Includes a dedicated skills park and pump track.
- Home to major events including the 2009 National and World Championships.

65,000+

interstate
MTB visitors
to Canberra

180,000

visitor nights

\$50M+

expenditure

As featured on Flow MTB -

flowmountainbike.com/destination/stromlo-mountain-bike-trails/



B. BLUE DERBY, DERBY, TAS

- Blue Derby transformed an old tin mining town into a mountain bike mecca attracting domestic and international riders and events.
- Opened in 2015.
- Over 125km MTB trails, plus a pump track catering for all levels.
- Home to major events including stage races, Nationals and World Enduro Championships.

30,000+

visitors
annually

3-4

nights stay

\$30M

annual
expenditure

As featured on Flow MTB-

flowmountainbike.com/destination/blue-derby/

SECTION 8

LEADING PRODUCT EXAMPLES

Looking for ideas or examples of businesses delivering a great bike friendly business? Check out these creative examples across different sectors.





ACCOMMODATION PLUS TOURS:

BLUE DERBY PODS RIDE.

bluederbypodside.com.au

Blue Derby Pods Ride has created a premium service, catering to mountain bikers by creating memorable packages comprised of adventure, accommodation and food experiences.

This luxury adventure mountain biking experience combines Tasmania's world-class Blue Derby Mountain Bike Trails network with unique, private pod accommodation and exceptional Tasmanian food and wine.

Pricing starts from \$1850 per person for a two day experience.



BIKE SHOP/RENTAL/TOUR:

SACRED RIDE – LUNAR-CY FULL MOON RIDES

sacredride.com.au

Based out of Jindabyne, Sacred Ride offers an epic mountain bike tour experience – riding ebikes to the top of Mt Kosciuszko under the light of the full moon, complete with local beverages and a guided tour of the range.

Making the ascent of Mt. Kosciuszko

Australia's highest mountain - for many is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and an 'experience' it should be. Every full-moon in summer Sacred Ride organises a bike ride to the top of Australia, involving a ride from Charlotte Pass to Rawson's Pass then a short walk to the summit which includes - bike and gear hire, a lift to Charlotte Pass (leaving 5:30pm), a guided tour of the range by our support team, and a shot or two of Wildbrumby schnapps upon reaching the summit as you watch the sun set over the main range and the full-moon appear in the Eastern sky."



FOOD AND BEVERAGE

FORREST BREWING COMPANY

forrestbrewing.com.au

A small scale brewery complete with bar, dining hall and a cottage accommodation option for riders. Located in Forrest, Victoria, a small rural township in the Otway Ranges. People visit Forrest to ride world class single track mountain bike trails visitotways.com/ride-forrest and the Forreest Brewing Company, with its bike décor and bike friendly environment, attracts this audience.

“Our kitchen prepares international and modern Australian style dishes, matched to our local beers. We also serve local wines, soft drinks, coffee and cakes. We cater for a wide range of dietary requirements including vegetarian, vegan, gluten free and dairy free. Our place is intentionally casual. You can dine in your bike riding gear or in your Sunday best. We are kid friendly, dog friendly and bike friendly.”



EXPERIENCE

FLOATING SAUNA

floatingsauna.com.au

An incredible Finnish woodfired sauna floating on Lake Derby. An Instagrammer's paradise! Guests spend an hour in the sauna and can cool off with a cold water plunge in the lake afterwards.

“Located in the little town of Derby, the Floating Sauna Lake Derby is the perfect way to finish a mountain bike adventure, or simply a retreat to take in the beauty of nature and the mountain air.”



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