

# virginblue

## voyeur

JULY 2009

TAKE ME  
I'M YOURS

### LIFE BEYOND THE DOWNTURN

Proceed with caution,  
or throw it to the wind?

+ Reheat, reboot and re-love  
– the new green living  
rules + getting the most  
out of the customers you've  
got + Polson's short cuts to  
success + come on get 'appy!

# LANCE ARMSTRONG

Cycling's comeback kid on the ride of his life



[virginblue.com.au](http://virginblue.com.au)

[polynesianblue.com](http://polynesianblue.com)

[flypacificblue.com](http://flypacificblue.com)

# A BREATH *of fresh air*

WHETHER YOU'RE ON TWO WHEELS, FOUR WHEELS OR EVEN YOUR OWN TWO FEET, THERE'S PLENTY TO ENJOY IN THE VICTORIAN HIGH COUNTRY, DISCOVERS **SUE WALLACE**.



*From left: Get hooked on cycling en route to Bright; Discover your favourite ale on the Brewery Trail; Work up a sweat hiking in the Victorian countryside.*



**M**ake the New South Wales city of Albury your base and immerse yourself in the beauty of countryside Victoria just over the border. It's a perfect opportunity to explore some stress-busting treks and trails by your favoured mode of transport. Who knows? You may even end up turning off your mobile phone.

## TWO WHEELS

### Murray to Mountains Rail Trail

You don't have to be a hardcore cyclist to enjoy this popular 94-kilometre bike path, which follows historic disused railway lines from the Murray River to the foot of Hotham mountain, through Ovens and King Valleys, Everton Hills and the Alpine High Country.

The official start is at Apex Park, Wangaratta, a 50-minute drive from Albury. I hop on my bike further along at Beechworth and speed downhill on a picturesque one-hour ride to Everton, which takes me through farmland and pristine bushland.

After a refresher at the Everton Hotel, I continue for two hours to Myrtleford – a comfortable ride except for the challenging

Gapsted Hill. A hearty lunch at Gapsted Winery makes up for the sore legs and then it's an easy ride on to my destination, where I stay at Motel on Alpine overnight. I ride on to Bright the next day, which takes two hours, and spend the day perusing the local shops.

After two days of cycling, I'm hooked – the great thing is that you often have the trail to yourself. The Rail Trail links the townships of Wangaratta, Beechworth, Myrtleford, Porepunkah and Bright and it's easy to create your own trip. For weary cyclists, one of the saviours is the 'Bus-a-Bike' company, which will pick you and your bike up anywhere along the trail and transfer you to your car or to your accommodation.

Another great feature is the new Pedal to Produce Tour. Hire a basket that attaches to the front of your bike and follow the maps to buy treats – with the handy discount voucher book – at local producers en route.

At the end of each day, I have a basketful of goodies including freshly baked bread, raspberries, homemade cheese and local wine. With all this fare, it's lucky I'm catching the Bus-a-Bike back to Beechworth. ▷

## DEALS ON WHEELS

The high country is home to several companies that support you as you get on your bike and explore.

### :: Bus-a-Bike

Prices vary. It costs \$140 to drive up to six people and their bikes from Bright to Wangaratta.  
+61 3 5752 2974

### :: Motel on Alpine

+61 3 57 521438  
www.motelonalpine.com.au

### :: Murray to Mountains Rail Trail Information

www.murraytomountains.com.au

### :: Pedal to Produce

1300 366 321 (in Aus)  
www.pedaltoproduce.com.au



From left: Enjoy tasty grub with Pedal to Produce; try beer or wine at Boynton's Feathertop Winery; go nuts for a hike through the chestnut trees of Mt Buffalo.

### DRIVE OR WALK

**:: Alpine Valley Tours**  
www.alpinevalleytours.com.au

**:: Boynton's Feathertop Winery**  
www.boynton.com.au

**:: Bright Brewery**  
www.brightbrewery.com.au

**:: Buckland Studio Retreat**  
www.thebuckland.com.au

**:: Hedonistic Hiking**  
www.hedonistichiking.com.au

**:: Jamieson Brewery**  
www.jamiesonbrewery.com.au

### BOOK WITH BLUE HOLIDAYS

**:: Quality Siesta Resort**  
Includes return airfares and two nights' accommodation. From \$336pp.\* For bookings, visit [www.virginblue.com.au/holidays](http://www.virginblue.com.au/holidays) or call 13 15 16 (in Australia).

\*Per person, twin share. Excludes Sydney. Conditions apply. On sale until 31 July 2009, for travel until 30 September 2009.

### FOUR WHEELS

#### Victoria's High Country Brewery Trail

If you're interested in artisan beer, take a trip along the High Country Brewery Trail, which is within two hours' drive of Albury.

The six family-owned and operated microbreweries are all small, hands-on affairs where you can chat to the brewers as you taste their hand-crafted beers.

You'd have to be a speed drinker to visit all six in one day, so pick a couple or let Alpine Valley Tours take the hassle out of choosing with its full- or half-day tours.

I sign up for the Brewer For a Day class at Bright Brewery and learn how to make beer with head brewer David Cocks. He takes you through every aspect of the process, from milling the grain to tasting the beers.

Kel Boynton of Boynton's Feathertop Winery at Porepunkah is both a brewer and winemaker. He says the two go hand-in-hand. "It's all about the fermenting process, so if you make wine, you can make beer," he says.

Near Mansfield and Mt Buller, Jamieson Brewery offers a range of award-winning ales, including a raspberry one, which brewer Jeff Whyte says is a winner with women. I can't resist a taste and discover it is not as sweet as it sounds, but rather tart. After all that smelling, swilling and swallowing, I think beer is my new favourite drink.

### TWO FEET

#### Mt Buffalo National Park hike with Hedonistic Hiking

I have scrambled up a huge rock in Mt Buffalo National Park and am staring out at towering

granite tors scattered throughout the area as I take a well-earned break.

"It's only another 20 minutes," says our guide, Mick Parsons from Hedonistic Hiking, and somehow the slopes I've spent all morning climbing don't seem as steep when I think about the gourmet lunch that awaits me. Mick's partner, Jackie, has taken a short cut and she's waiting with a wonderful picnic of homemade buns, cheeses, crunchy salads, fresh fruit and local wine.

The scenery of Mt Buffalo features majestic mountains and bushland studded with brightly coloured wildflowers that bloom annually amid tall peppermint gums. And it's all within a 90-minute drive of Albury.

The Parsons specialise in guided hikes which last one to seven days, catering for all ages and energies. They offer scenic walks, both in Australia and Italy, combined with luxury accommodation and fine food and wine. In Australia, the hikes cover North East Victoria and the Great Ocean Road.

After hiking for the day, I return to the picturesque and eco-friendly Buckland Studio Retreat and sink into a hot bath. There's a resident wombat who slowly wanders by the front door of my room. Right on time, a masseuse, which I'd had the foresight to order through the retreat earlier, arrives at my door ready to work her magic.

The company meets holiday-makers at Albury Airport and tailors short breaks around Victoria's High Country. Hiking trips in Australia run from November to April.

**To book and earn rewards for your cycling, driving or hiking trip to Albury, turn to page 129.**