



### Riding Bikes in Japan (contributed by Ann Ritchie)

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This piece is titled Bike Riding in Japan. This might create a false impression that I actually rode a bike in Japan last year when I was there. I did not for many reasons some of which may be inferred through reading this piece.

The first thing I noticed about bike riding in Japan was that most Japanese rode similar bikes. These are called "mama chari" style bikes (much internet research to uncover that bit of information) and are step through bikes with a lock on the back wheel. They are fairly heavy too but then most Japanese are slight people so probably the over all weight of bike and rider is similar to our light bikes ridden by larger Australians. This weight however is however compromised by that fact that while Japanese bikes have two handlebars it does seem in Japan that one of these must be simply considered back up if the other fails. Riders must always carry something in the other hand. Shopping, umbrellas, mobile phone, bunches of flowers, brooms, plastic bags full of who knows what and even a pet dog have been observed in the hands of riders in Japan. If there is nothing to carry and there appears no need at that moment to talk on your mobile phone then scratching your head or waving to fellow rider becomes obligatory.

There is no need to worry about the right gear either, no need for Lycra or the latest hip defiantly non-Lycra gear. Suits, long skirts and everyday work gear (including high heels) are the clothing of choice. The only place I saw actual

racing bikes (with turned down handlebars used by both hands) and helmets and Lycra was in the Imperial Palace Grounds on Sunday. Apparently every Sunday the roads are closed to traffic and open to cyclists. Everyone is able to bring their own bike or hire one. Hiring is free!! There is a real mish mash of riders circumnavigating the grounds with pedestrians crossing at odd places to actually look at the Palace. A fascinating thing to see. It all looked much too chaotic for me to have a go.

Japan is mostly mountainous but all the large cities are built on the very flat coastal areas. This is ideal for cycling as no one has to climb large hills or really get off the flat. You can pretty much ride

anywhere on roads, through malls, on footpaths and even into hotels. I think there are some rules that govern where you ride but it is really hard to work these out through observation. Setting up your bike in Japan does not seem to be quite the same science as here in Aussie. It seems to me that the correct set up means that when sitting stationary on your bike you are able to place both feet flat on the ground, while remaining in your saddle, and having your knees bent at a ninety degree angle. I expect this is so that when you are riding around reading a



magazine or watching a movie on you phone you will be able to avoid the likelihood of loosing you balance. Once the saddle height is set correctly, in order to obtain maximum power from your peddle stroke, you will need to place you heels on the pedals and with your feet pointing outwards lean in the direction of the foot as you make a downward stroke. It seems to work as the riders apparently get to their destination without a modicum of sweat.

No one travels at speed (except on Sunday in the Imperial Palace grounds) and in the unlikely event that the rider has to ascend any type of hill they will get off the bike. Riders are able to weave around pedestrians with ease and cars need to pay the bikes little attention. It seemed to me riding a bike in Japan was a fairly laid back past time and worked well for most Japanese who only needed to cover short flat distances.

If I go back I might give it a go!!

### (Virtual) Bike Lanes

How often have we cursed our road-riding being made more dangerous than it is by the fact there are no bike lanes? There you are, out in the traffic flow with cars speeding past just centimeters from your right leg. It is a frightening scenario.

Well, Arnold has the right idea. Bring your own “virtual bike lane“ with you when next you ride at night.

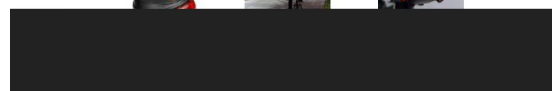
This wonderful, “projected” bike lane, travels along with you and is supplied by a pair of lasers attached to a standard rear bike light that project the lane onto the the road. Clever device.



Store > Bicycle Lights > Bicycle Lights

## DuoLaser Rear Light

★★★★★ (82)



## Banyule BUG cycling tops

Extremely fine example of the cycling community model what is sure to become a “hot ticket” item in cycling tops. The new Banyule BUG cycling tops are a stand-out with their distinctive red ladybird (bug) on a white background. Of course, being a 'cycling stand-out' does carry with it a large measure of responsibility.



Apart from being the motif on our cycling tops and elsewhere, the ['common ladybird'](#) is an interesting beetle. Learn more by following the link.

## Warburton a better place to be.



The Warburton Trail has always been a pleasure to ride but more so now since it has been recently upgraded. While we are all aware of the ascetics of the trail, especially in Autumn, off trail Warburton itself has much to offer. Historic forests, the Yarra river in its silver form, waterwheel, cafes etc. The town also offers a diverse range of activities at different times mostly centred around protecting and preserving the environment.



The upgrades to the trail have mainly taken place between The Cog Cafe Warburton and Millgrove and make for a more enjoyable ride. As well as the trail resurface some bridges have

also been resurfaced, one further down the track towards Yarra Junction as well as the one between Warburton and Millgrove.



The Redwood Forest just out of Warburton is one of its lesser known attractions and well worth a visit. Made up of mainly Californian Redgums. The Board of Works apparently instigated the planting in the 1930s as an experiment and it has evolved since then. It is sometimes used as a spiritual rendezvous by the locals, it is also a popular place for weddings.

Close to the track at Yarra Junction each year the community get together for the Ecotopia Earth Festival which occurs around the idea of sustainable living. One of its features is the recyclable fashion parade. There is entertainment for all including bands, food and wine tasting. This is most definitely an event worth incorporating into a bike ride.

The general store at Millgrove is also worth a visit. Where else are you going to be able to purchase worms, guitar strings and bike tubes at the one place this even beats Aldi. If none of these options get you excited the best choice then is to just chill out and enjoy the view from the main street.



Maureen Fisher

People interested in the ["Ecotopia Festival"](#) can read all about it here. Just follow the highlighted link.

### [National Bike Register](#)

This might be something worth investigating. It is a system of registering on a national database details of bike ownership. The database can then be used for recovery of bikes and research into stolen bikes. It is being promoted by DataDot Technology Ltd.

### **Do you have an (inflated) notion of the ideal tyre pressure for a bike?**

We all know definitely what a deflated tyre is like to ride on. We all have some idea as to what a under-inflated tyre is like to ride on. But the optimum tyre pressure is the stuff of many a discussion. Personally, I have always gone with the tyre manufactures upper-limit recommendation.

Here, [\(from "Cycling Tips"\)](#) at last, is evidence based research that cuts through the over-inflated hype and presents the facts on tyre pressure.

### **From the web**

[Cyclists and Motorists are not equal on the road so let's stop pretending they are.](#)

Send your contributions for inclusion in the next edition to Allan Garbutt - [allang@bigpond.net.au](mailto:allang@bigpond.net.au)