

I am thinking of buying a new bike for the 2011 RACV Great Victorian Bike Ride. How do I choose the right bike for me?

The RACV Great Victorian Bike Ride is a unique event and places demands on the recreational rider that other bike events just don't match. So the bike that you ride is an important consideration in allowing you to enjoy every stage of the journey to the fullest.

So just what bike is the right bike for the RACV Great Victorian Bike Ride? One thing is certain: there is no such thing as one bike style that is going to suit everyone. Every rider's aims and aspirations for the event are different and these will dictate what style of bike suits best.

Let's look at the nature of the event. As any past RACV Great Victorian Bike Ride rider knows, this event is one of the most rewarding, active holidays that anyone could take. A great deal of that reward comes from the challenge of the ride, but the wrong bike can easily turn it from a challenge into a battle.

The first thing to consider is your personal goal for the Ride. Do you intend to get to the finish of each day as quickly as possible, on a swift steed that goes like the wind? Or is being comfortable and enjoying the ride at a laid-back pace more important?

It may be frustrating to have riders pull away from you on the road. But remember the story of the tortoise and the hare, and ask yourself who will be riding with the biggest smile in nine days time?

So, which bike is best for you? There are three main styles of bike that will be popular on the ride; could one of these be right for you?

Hybrid bikes are a great choice for long tours such as the RACV Great Victorian Bike Ride. They are built with comfort in mind and their large road wheels and medium pressure tyres let them cruise at a good speed on tarmac while still being at home on a rail trail. It is possible to sit fairly upright on most hybrids so that there is little strain on the back when riding, but this does mean that if a headwind blows then you are exposed to the full force of it. Is this a serious problem? Well, only if you are aiming for the quickest time possible. Hybrids are usually equipped with mountain bike style gears so a headwind can be treated just like a hill – engage a low or easy gear, keep your legs turning, and relax into a rhythm that works for you!

Road racing bikes (also called road bikes) are built for speed, with drop handlebars, thin tyres, and a light frame. But they are not only for racers; in fact the majority of the thousands of road bikes sold every year are never subjected to stopwatches and win-at-all-cost conditions. The stretched-out, aerodynamic riding position a road bike gives is designed to help you to go fast. However, only a rider who is 100% comfortable on their road bike will be able to take advantage of the design. Otherwise, your discomfort will negate any gain in speed that the bike might otherwise offer. For this reason it's important to make sure you get a good fit when you buy a road bike. Ask for the

assistance of Bicycle Superstore staff when choosing a road bike, take it for a test ride, and ask as many questions as you need to determine whether this is the right style for you? The initial rush can be exhilarating, that sense of speed, but imagine yourself 80km in and 100 to go, is it still the best choice? If yes then great you will have to make sure you stop and admire the view because the scenery is going to fly by.

Flatbar road bikes are one of the most successful bicycle styles of recent times. They are a really good compromise between a hybrid and a road racing bike, because they offer greater speed than a hybrid and more comfort than a road bike. Flatbar road bikes tend to be a little lighter at each price point than the equivalent hybrid, the tyres hold higher air pressures for reduced rolling resistance, and the rider's position on the bike tends towards a lower, more stretched posture which offers improved aerodynamics. Now, depending on the individual, this increase in speed can come at the expense of some degree of comfort. The vibration from the road will feel a little higher and whether you like the stretched-out posture will be a matter of personal choice.

So how do you know which bike is right for you? Well, taking all three styles of bike for a ride is a great first test. Even a five minute spin around the block will give you a good idea of which style you like the most. Talk to the Bicycle Superstore staff and ask their advice but ultimately the decision lies with you, the rider, and the important bit is to be honest with yourself about what your 2011 RACV Great Victorian Bike Ride aims and aspirations really are.

Bicycle Superstore is with you every step of the way on this ride keeping your bike running 100%. We are also the official Mechanical Support for the ride again for 2011 and we look forward to seeing some familiar faces again for 2011.