

## Motorcycle Touring Guide: Bonang Road (Victoria)

The **Bonang Road** is widely regarded as one of Australia's most remote and rewarding motorcycle rides. Stretching from near Delegate (NSW border) to Orbost in East Gippsland, it winds through dense forest, river valleys and rugged mountain terrain. For experienced riders, the Bonang Road offers a technical and scenic journey, but one that demands considerable respect, planning and caution.

### Overview and Distance

The Bonang Road runs roughly 140–150 km depending on your start point, linking the Monaro region of NSW to the Gippsland coast of Victoria. Despite this relatively modest distance it typically takes **around 3 hours to complete** due to its tight, winding nature and terrain and the fact you will probably wish to take a couple of breaks along the way to maintain your focus.

This is not a fast ride, but a highly technical one to challenge your skills and body.

### Road Conditions

As of late 2024, the entire road is **fully sealed**, a major improvement over its earlier mixed-surface reputation.

However, “sealed” does not mean easy. The road is typified by **narrow carriageways** with minimal shoulders, **constant tight curves** many of which are blind with decreasing radius. Then throw in **steep gradients**, climbing and descending ridge lines, limited guardrails in places and the **remote location** with long distances between services...well you get the picture, not easy.

Because the road follows ridges and creek lines you are almost always either cornering, climbing, or descending, there are only a couple of short straight sections. There are few points along the road where you can simply pull over safely or overtake. Fortunately the surface is generally ok but there are many dips and harsh bumps which can upset bike balance if you didn't read the road ahead or are traveling too fast.

### Curves and Riding Character

Bonang Road is defined by continuous corner sequences with little opportunity to relax making the road exhausting on large cruisers or heavy tourers.

This is definitely a road where rhythm matters far more than speed and realistically riders should expect a **slow average pace**, often between 50–80 km/h, depending on conditions and be sure not to become target fixated, try to look as far ahead as possible at all times, which can be challenging on this particular road when you are also trying to see the debris on the road in front of you.

## Debris and Hazards

One of the biggest risks on Bonang Road is **unexpected debris**, including gravel washed onto corners after rain, fallen branches, trees and leaf litter, mud patches in shaded or low areas. And then of course there are kangaroos, wombats, deer, birds and even cattle!

Does all the above sound ominous, now throw in some logging trucks on weekdays and the residue they leave behind. Logging activity is common all over the region, always assume something could be around the next blind corner.

The road can be slippery and wet in spots and then bone dry on others due the shading and sun angles.

## Safety Considerations

Motorcycle safety is critical on a road like this. Key principles include **ride to the conditions**, especially consider that surface grip can change quickly on the Bonang . Maintain conservative corner entry speeds and stay well within your lane, which can be tricky to judge because there there are no centrelines for much of the road.

High-visibility gear and headlights are needed for visibility and avoid riding at dusk or dawn unless you want to go wildlife spotlighting!

Emergency services coverage is limited, riders should carry basic tools and a puncture repair kit, it's probably also a good idea to carry water and snacks.

Finally note that mobile phone is patchy at best.

## Speed Limits

Speed limits vary along the route but are typically 80–100 km/h in open sections, which are few, the advisory speeds for corners are typically low, you'll find many 25kph and 35kph corners, most of which are not constant radius!

In practice, the road geometry dictates your speed more than signage. Excess speed is the major risk factor on the Bonang—reducing speed significantly improves safety margins.

## Elevation and Terrain

The Bonang Road traverses the **Great Dividing Range**, with frequent elevation changes, it climbs to over **800 – 1000 metres** in some sections and in winter can be subject to black ice and snow.

There are several descents into river valleys and forest basins and you can expect cooler temperatures at higher elevations and changing weather conditions.

## Weather Conditions

Weather plays a major role in the ride, in **Winter** it's generally cold, damp with possible fog and black ice in shaded areas. **Summer** on the other hand can be very warm with a risk of bushfires and road closures.

**Autumn/Spring** are goldilocks with ideal riding conditions with mild temperatures.

Rain at any time of the year when combined with the inherent build up of slime debris significantly increases risk due to slippery surfaces.

## Best Time of Year?

The ideal riding window is, **Spring (Oct–Nov)** – green landscapes, mild temperatures and **Autumn (Mar–Apr)** – stable weather, fewer tourists.

## Suitable Motorcycles

Bonang Road suits a range of bikes, but some are much better than others, adventure bikes (mid-weight ADV), Sport-touring motorcycles, lightweight naked or sports bikes, especially those in the 250-400CC range can be an absolute hoot.

## Less suitable

Large cruisers and Touring Bikes due to the very tight corners and limited ground clearance and supersports whilst ok are really wasted on this road due to having performance which cannot be safely used and often harsher suspension that will hammer the spine on the rough bumps and defects.

On the Bonang Road, comfort, agility and good suspension travel are far more important than outright power.

## Key Viewing Locations

Bonang Road is rich in natural beauty, though viewpoints are often informal. You will get Snowy River valley glimpses, forest lookouts near Bonang township and be impressed by **Errinundra Plateau** areas with its towering old-growth forest.

Take care when stopping—many areas have limited safe pull-offs and the provided pull-offs often have loose gravel which will slip under foot, especially with heavy tourers.

## Rest Stops and Towns

Facilities are sparse, but key stopping points include, **Delegate (NSW side)** which has fuel and basic services, **Bonang** with very limited facilities and no fuel,

**Goongerah** a small settlement, occasional café or community shop and finally **Orbost** which has full services, fuel, food and accommodation.

Always fuel up before entering the route, there is **no fuel** along the way.

### **Food Options**

Food is absent along the road itself, so plan ahead, **Delegate** has small cafés and bakery-style food, **Goongerah** an occasional local café and **Orbost** which has multiple pubs, cafés and takeaway options.

If you want to cover all bases and considering you'll likely want to take a breather or two along the way, carry some snacks.

### **Accommodation**

Nearby accommodation options include, **Orbost** with motels, caravan parks, pubs. **Delegate** with basic lodgings and camping and if you have a sense of adventure you can try forest camping, there are several sites in surrounding national parks

Orbost is the best base for riders wanting comfort and services.

### **Traffic Levels**

Traffic is generally **very light**, which adds to the appeal—but also increases risk, few vehicles means less immediate help if something goes wrong, logging trucks may appear unexpectedly and tourist traffic increases during summer holidays.

Mid-week riding is often the quietest other than having to contend with logging trucks.

### **Time to Ride**

Allow: 3 hours minimum riding time, 4–5 hours with stops, photos and breaks.

This is a ride to savour, not rush, if ever there was a ride that is about the journey not the destination, this is it.

### **Final Thoughts**

Bonang Road is one of Australia's great hidden motorcycle routes—remote, technical and deeply scenic. Compared to more famous rides like the Great Ocean Road, it offers far less traffic, far more technical riding and a much greater sense of isolation

The isolation comes with responsibility. Be well prepared, take a conservative riding approach, allow for your mind and body becoming tired and maintain vigilant awareness of the conditions that are constantly changing.

For riders who value **flowing corners, wilderness and challenge**, Bonang Road delivers an unforgettable experience.