



A group of riders set out to complete the 1,000-kilometre Munda Bididi Trail. The event provided the opportunity to look back at the trail's beginnings and its path to completion.

by Stuart Harrison

MASTERING THE MUNDA BIDDIDI

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Above The Munda Bididi Epic 1000 riders rode from Albany to Mundaring as the first end-to-end users of the completed Munda Bididi Trail.
Photo – Geoff Snell

Opposite page
Different terrains make the trail interesting and challenging.
Photo – Karen Rose

In early autumn 2013, with the heat of a long summer fading, a group of 26 eager adventurers set out on their mountain bikes from Albany on the south-coast. These intrepid riders from across Australia were aiming to be the first 'Trailblazers', setting themselves the challenge of riding 1,000 kilometres to Mundaring on the outskirts of Perth and being the first to ride end-to-end on the Munda Bididi Trail.

During the next three weeks, as part of the Munda Bididi Trail Foundation's first Munda Bididi Epic 1000, the riders experienced all the south-west has to offer, from rugged rocky coastline and remote wilderness to spectacular forest and river valleys, while battling it out against heat,

sunshine and rain. The continually changing trail and infamous pea gravel caught a few by surprise, with plenty of hills and descents to keep their hearts and pedals pumping.

The riders spent their nights camping out on the trail or in small country communities where they gratefully accepted comfortable accommodation and opportunities to dine on the local produce and drink the world-famous wines.

A VISION IS BORN

The development of the Munda Bididi has taken more than 12 years, and many people have asked how the Munda Bididi came to be. Since the 1980s there has been a steady increase in recreational mountain biking, with



the first mountain bikes virtually just road bikes with knobby tyres. Since then, both the activity and the bikes have significantly changed, evolving into different disciplines including downhill and cross country, which became an Olympic sport in 1996. (See also 'Munda Biddi: Pathway through the forest', *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2002–03.)

Back in 1998, the then Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) had just completed the redevelopment and extension of the world-famous Bibbulmun Track. The redevelopment saw the trail re-aligned off the old forestry tracks, with large sections of dedicated walking trail built. It was this dedicated walking trail that was unwittingly attracting

a growing number of mountain bikers searching for the thrill of tight, twisty, single-track riding. At the time, the demand for dedicated mountain bike trails outstripped the supply, and the increasing numbers of walkers using the new trail started to encounter more and more mountain bikers. It was this narrow walking trail that spawned the initial concept for the Munda Biddi.

In 2000, CALM, other state government agencies and businesses combined with the fledgling Western Australian Mountain Bike Association to develop the concept further, aiming to build a long-distance off-road cycle touring trail. As the first stages of trail planning and construction began, the project became known as the Munda Biddi Trail,



Do it yourself

Where is it? The Munda Biddi starts in Mundaring and stretches 1,068 kilometres to Albany.

Camp sites Twelve camp sites are positioned along the way.

Ride yourself Different sections of the trail are ranked according to their difficulty and vary in length, from short day rides to several-week cycling adventures. Check out the 'Trip planning' tab at www.mundabiddi.org.au.

Get involved Volunteering and event participation is possible by contacting the Munda Biddi Trail Foundation.

Find out more Visit the Munda Biddi Trail Foundation website at www.mundabiddi.org.au.

which translates from the local Noongar language as 'path through the forest'. The Munda Biddi Trail Foundation was also born, a not-for-profit community organisation that assists the now Department of Parks and Wildlife to manage the trail.

FROM DREAM TO REALITY

The first major section of the trail was opened in 2004, stretching more than 300 kilometres between Mundaring and Collie. Further sections of trail were planned and built as funds became available. In 2009, in partnership with Munda Biddi Trail Foundation, the then Department of Environment and Conservation successfully made an application to the Royalties for Regions program for funds to complete the trail. The considerable funding changed the project's pace, with additional staff and contractors employed throughout the south-west, all working towards completing the trail within a challenging three-year timeframe.

The department consulted with the community and stakeholders, planned alignments, sought approvals, and construction of the trail started. During the next few years, the trail began to unfold over the landscape, weaving its way through south-west towns and forests, farmland and wilderness, down to the spectacular southern coastline.

While the Epic 1000, or an end-to-end ride might not be your cup of tea, the Munda



Right Whether a short ride or an epic adventure, the Munda Biddi has options that suit a range of ages and abilities. Photo – Andrew McGregor

Biddi Trail offers a spectrum of different opportunities that cater to a range of people, be it a simple morning ride, a challenging expedition, or a chance to volunteer and help maintain the trail. Is there an opportunity waiting there for you?

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