



Trails firing up Dwellingup

In 1961, a bushfire swept through Dwellingup destroying houses and nearby timber settlements. Today, trail tourism is heating up in the area once again, transforming and reshaping the town.

by Rod Annear



Dwellingup was once known as a timber and fruit growing town approximately 100 kilometres south-east of Perth. The area's relatively high rainfall, deep Murray River valley and fertile soils gave rise to tall jarrah and marri forests, which fed timber mills in and around town, driving employment and the economy.

The nearby Lane Poole Reserve, named after WA's first Conservator of Forests, Charles Lane Poole, has long been a playground for locals and attracted visitors to camp, swim, fish, walk, paddle and ride in the reserve. The areas' proximity to Perth, natural beauty and physical features also drew schools, bringing students to Dwellingup for outdoor education camps.

Lane Poole Reserve's new mountain bike trail network is now complete and riders have signalled their approval by arriving in droves.

"The trails are super busy," Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) project manager Sarah Campbell said.

"We knew there was a lot of unmet demand for quality trails, but even so, we have been surprised by how popular the new trails have been. Since the official opening in October 2020, there



have been more than 100,000 rides recorded on our trail counters," Sarah said.

Peter White has been running Dwellingup Adventures for nearly 30 years, leading visitors and school groups on outdoor adventures in the forests and rivers around Dwellingup. He sees a bright future for trails, the outdoors and for the area.

"Getting people outdoors has been a big part of my life. I have seen first-hand the impact outdoor experiences have on people's lives," Peter said.

"They often become fitter, healthier, more confident and you can see through time in nature they form a connection to that place. The focus on trails has lit a fire on a new era of trail tourism for Dwellingup, and it's burning bright.

"Over the years we have seen the focus change to outdoor pursuits and the area's natural environment is becoming as highly valued for tourism as it once was for timber. The Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail both come right through town and this made trail tourists more visible."

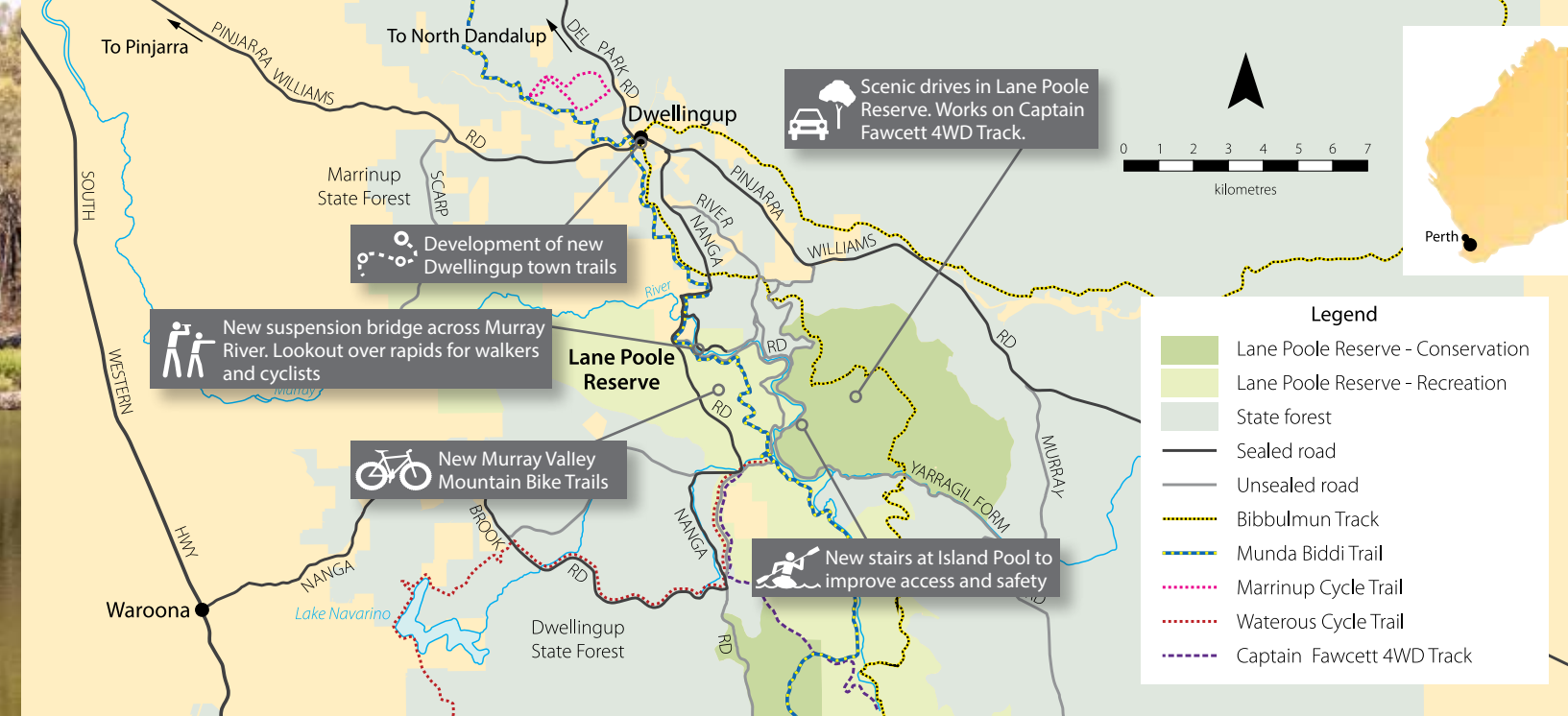


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Main Rider on the Murray Valley Mountain Bike Trails.

Above Riders taking a break on the nearby Murray River.
Photos – Tim Bardsley-Smith

Left Murray Valley Mountain Bike Trail Network.
Photo – Rod Annear



Dwellingup Trail and Visitor Centre

The Dwellingup Trail and Visitor Centre sits proudly in the middle of town, offering visitors the latest information on trail adventures and features interactive digital maps, virtual reality trail experiences, maps, guides, equipment and more. It also houses the Waypoints Café, where you can refresh and refill before/after hitting the trails, and an outdoor shop. Here you can hire or purchase outdoor equipment including bikes, water craft, camping gear and spares. The Centre sits between a bike pump track and skatepark and the Hotham Valley Railway, where steam trains take you on a trip through surrounding forest.



Top The Roost trailhead sign.

Above A trail with personality! Trail marker signage, Murray Valley.

Far right Dwellingup Trails and Visitor Centre. Photos – Rod Annear

Right Dwellingup Pump Track. Photo – Tim Bardsley-Smith



What is a trail town?

A 'trail town' is a population centre offering a large range of high-quality trails, trail-user-related services, facilities, trail-related businesses and supportive governance. In addition to meeting specific distances of sanctioned, signed and high-quality purpose-built single-track mountain bike or hiking trail towns will need to meet a range of essential criteria.

The Trails WA Trail Town Accreditation Program is a tailored, best practice accreditation system designed to help communities become world class trail tourism destinations.

Independent not-for-profit organisation Trails WA rolled out the trail town Accreditation program for aspiring trail towns in Western Australia. Dwellingup will be among the first towns to go through this accreditation process.



A greater focus on trails has seen Dwellingup adopt tag lines, 'Where Trails Meet' and 'Wild at Heart,' with the Shire of Murray and locals beginning to think about how Dwellingup could become a 'trail town'.

Steve Bennett has been working on trails and trail development in Western Australia for more than 15 years.

"Since 2012, towns across WA were assessed to see how well they measured up as possible trail towns and Dwellingup was one of the first places we looked at," Steve said.

"While the town has some great qualities, there were gaps in the number, variety and length of trails as well as information and services such as food, accommodation and transport."

John Cusack is an architect who made the tree change to Dwellingup in 2014 and saw the potential of Dwellingup becoming a trail town.

"It's a special place to live," John said.

"Nature is on your doorstep; the town has character and soul and the people who live here are motivated to see the

Dwellingup Adventure Trails

From all the planning and enthusiasm for trails in Dwellingup, the Dwellingup Adventure Trails project came to life. A joint Federal, State and Local Government project will see the following projects rolled out by 2022–23



**DWELLINGUP
ADVENTURE
TRAILS**

Mountain bike trails

- 32 kilometres of new, dedicated mountain bike trails in Murray Valley and near Dwellingup
- Eight kilometres of realigned Munda Biddi Trail linking Dwellingup to trails network

Canoe trails

- New stairs at Island Pool on Murray River to improve access and safety

Scenic drive trails

- Sealing of roads in Lane Poole Reserve

Dwaarlindjirraap Trail Centre

- Commercial 'pop-up' centre by private operator with kiosk, equipment hire and services complementing the Dwellingup Trails and Visitor Centre

Suspension bridge

- New suspension bridge across Murray River linking Baden Powell with Murray Valley mountain bike circuit
- Lookout over the rapids for walkers and cyclists



town prosper. Many people got involved to develop a community-led trail plan for the town. To see this becoming a reality is incredibly rewarding.”

The townspeople of Dwellingup are very supportive of developing the trail town, and the Shire of Murray has been at the forefront, leading the change and transformation.

Shire of Murray CEO Dean Unsworth has applied his infectious enthusiasm to the vision of Dwellingup becoming a trail town.

“We had a look at what others were doing around Australia and the world

and quickly realised we had the makings of a first-class trail destination here in Dwellingup,” Dean said.

“Council and community were on board with the idea to invest in new infrastructure to support visitors coming to town for trail adventures.”

From that enthusiasm and planning, the Dwellingup Trail and Visitor Centre

was born; a new facility to welcome visitors seeking trail adventures. Trail and visitor centre manager Susan Allan said the new facility has been a raging success.

“Since we opened in September 2020, visitation is up by 190 per cent and sales are up by 30 per cent. We couldn't be more pleased with how much visitors love the new centre,” Susan said.

Opposite page

Top far left Marrinup Falls, Dwellingup.

Photo – Josh Cowling/Shire of Murray

Top left Camping at Lane Poole Reserve.

Photo – Tourism WA

Above Murray River, Lane Poole Reserve.

Right Morning mist at the Murray Valley Mountain Bike Trails.

Photos – Josh Cowling/Shire of Murray



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