

HOOKED ON AUDAX



AUDAX is an international organisation geared for cyclists who like to ride long distances. Audax originated in 1897 when a group of European cyclists rode 200 km between sunrise and sunset and become known as 'Les Audacious'.

Today, Audax clubs exist in over 20 countries. Audax Australia has clubs across the country in most capital cities and several regional centres. The club runs rides of set distances: 50, 100, 200, 300, 400, 600, 1,000 and 1,200 km for road rides. Then there are 35, 70 and 100 km off road rides, a few 24 hour endurance rides and point-to-point tours, called Raids, which range from 350 km to 1200 km.

The thing that all of these Audax rides have in common is that they must be completed within certain time limits. These are based on 15 kph for the road distances, 10 kph for off-road distances and around 80 km per day for the Raids.

Audax enables riders of any ability to set themselves a goal and achieve it. This spirit of achievement is what attracts so many riders to

Audax. The rewards are personal and yet can be accomplished with a group of like-minded cyclists. As the time limits required to complete events are generous, Audax appeals to a wide variety of cyclists, whether they are from a touring, racing, recreational or commuting background.

All riders on Audax events are issued with and must carry a 'brevet' card. This card acts as a type of

Good Excuse. Checkpoints are always a great reason to stop for a chat and a feed.

Extra Challenges

As well as attempting the individual distances, riders can complete an Audax series, within one Audax year (November to October) to gain awards. The Australian Nouveau Series comprises 50, 100 and 200 km, the Super

Audax rides are more than a cross between touring and racing. **PATRICK VAN DYK** reveals a few things that might get you hooked.

passport that riders must have stamped at checkpoints, or controls, set on the course at around 80 km intervals. Depending upon the ride, the stamping is either done by an Audax volunteer, or obtained by the rider at a police station, post office, service station or shop, etc. The time of arrival is also registered.

On completion of the ride, the brevet card is returned to the ride organiser and sent for recording. Audax Australia records distances of 50 and 100 km on road rides, all off road distances (known as Dirt rides) and Raids. Audax Club Parisian (ACP), based of course in France, records distances of 200, 300, 400 and 600 km. The ACP keeps records of all rides, or randonnees as they are known, from all member countries, on a central database.

Randonneur Series comprises 200, 300, 400 & 600 km distances and the Dirt Series comprises 35, 70 and 100 km.

Cloth patches and medallions are available to successful riders for these events and also for the Fleche Opperman, a 24 hr event. Finishers of Raids can obtain specially designed plaques. Riders also get their brevet card returned, affixed with an individually numbered brevet sticker.

Being part of an international organisation, Audax offers riders the chance to strive for other awards if they are planning on cycling overseas. For example you can ride a 200 in Australia, a 300 in France, a 400 in Canada, and a 600 in South Africa, within any four year period, and you're eligible for the International Super Randonneur Award. This qualifies you for a French medallion issued by ACP. Each country generally has their own unique medallions and these in themselves are sometimes worth riding 600 km for!



No Rush. There's no rush to get to the checkpoints, unless you're setting your own personal best.

Special Events

Whilst there are hundreds of rides organised annually by the various regions across the country, there are a few events that stand out from the rest. The Alpine Classic is held every January in Bright, Victoria, and attracts around 700 riders. This cruel event of 200 km (shorter options also available) takes riders up Tawonga Gap, then it climbs 30 km up to Falls Creek, retraces back over Tawonga Gap and then sends riders to the top of Mt Buffalo. All in all it is 3,600 m of vertical climbing, in mid-summer! It's an exciting event and when that number of cyclists and their entourage descend into Bright it all makes for a great atmosphere.

Paris-Brest-Paris is by far the best known and most prestigious Audax ride to finish. It is held only once every four years, the last being in 1999 when over 70 Australians took part. Riders must qualify with a Super Series before entering. Over 3,000 riders from around the globe head through Brittany and Normandy, with locals offering all sorts of goodies along the way, even at 3 am in the smallest of villages. Once again it's a great atmosphere and well worth the effort of flying to France.

The Fleche Opperman, a tribute to the late Sir Hubert Opperman, is a team event held annually around November. With various finish locations around the country, teams of three to five bicycles must ride a minimum of 360 km within 24 hours, starting from anywhere and all heading to the central finish location. Around 35 teams take part nationally.

Raids are geared towards touring cyclists who are out for a challenge and a holiday at the same time. These rides are not programmed for specific dates—riders elect a starting date and pre-enter. Raids follow scenic routes and back roads, which often means they go the hilly way! Detailed route directions and a brevet card are issued, the idea being that riders must reach the final destination within the maximum time allowed.

On a Raid, there are no minimum speeds required along the way at intermediate checkpoints, unlike regular Audax rides where these are enforced. The minimum average distance is 80 km per day. Current routes connect Sydney/Canberra, Canberra/Melbourne and Devonport/Hobart.

Dirt rides are especially popular in the

All Together Now! *The Alpine Classic in Bright* gathers a huge crowd every January.



Adelaide hills region and regularly attract dozens of riders of all abilities. The great thing about any Audax ride is that you don't need to be fast, just have the ability to keep plodding along steadily. None of our events are races because the emphasis is on pacing yourself to finish and achieving your personal goal. As you're not the only one doing it, it's easier and you'll soon find new riding acquaintances to share the long kilometres with.

Getting Involved

If you'd like to try an Audax ride, it's very easy to participate. Being non-competitive, Audax are a friendly bunch and you'll be made very welcome. Check the calendar on the website, pick a ride that suits your ability and give the organiser a ring at least a week before the event. The organiser will advise you of the starting location, how many riders are expected, information about the route and anything else you'd like to know.

You will generally have to complete a disclaimer and pay a nominal entry fee on the day. This

varies between regions and also depends on whether the ride is supported (some food supplied at checkpoints) or unsupported (you carry all your own gear or buy it en route). As an example, an unsupported ride in the Sydney Region is \$7, a supported ride in Melbourne is around \$12, and all Raids are \$21.

The Audax club maintains a very active website at www.audax.org.au, with a full up to date calendar of events, contact phone numbers, event specific information, rules, news, downloadable copies of Checkpoint (the club's journal), ride reports and more.

There are currently around 600 members in Australia. You don't have to be a member to participate in any ride, but there are member benefits such as third-party insurance, the club's journal, discounted ride entry fees and other advantages.

To find out more, visit the website and for your local club contact, write to Audax Australia at PO Box 12144, A'Beckett St, Melbourne 8006, alternatively you can email at: info@audax.org.au, or phone (03) 9314 3815. It's that easy!

FREE OFFER!

Visit the Audax website anytime during November and you could win two free entries to the Raid of your choice!

www.audax.org.au

Breathtaking. Whether you push yourself to the limits of exhaustion is your choice, but the scenery on Raids can be superb.

