

Podcast 135 – Riding in Country Victoria – A Trip to Healesville

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 135 – Riding in Country Victoria – A Trip to Healesville

<https://traffic.libsyn.com/secure/slowenglish/podcast135.mp3>

(This podcast is 13 minutes and 28 seconds long.)

Hi,

I previously explained in earlier podcasts (see Podcast <https://slowenglish.info/podcast-117-riding-in-country-victoria-a-trip-to-seymour/> and Podcast <https://slowenglish.info/a-hobby-in-melbourne-motorcycling/>) that my main hobby is motorcycling. I love to ride to one of the many small towns in country Victoria, always taking the backroads to enjoy the riding and the scenery. I ride either alone or with some retired friends who also have motorcycles. In this podcast, I would like to tell you about a trip to Healesville, a small and picturesque town just outside Melbourne.

Healesville is a popular destination for Melburnians on the weekend or a public holiday. It is around 60 kilometres from the centre of Melbourne and around 45 kilometres from where I live on the city outskirts. The population is around 7,500 people and it sits at the edge of the Dandenong Ranges which extend out eastwards and northwards from the town.



The view towards the Dandenong Ranges from outside Healesville.

These ranges are not really a mountain range in the normal sense, as they are not very high, with the highest peak being around 630m. However, they are very well-wooded with a variety of trees and plants and are a delight to ride or drive through. I suspect that they help to keep the town a bit cooler on the hotter days.

Healesville is a popular destination for Melburnians because of the many street cafes and restaurants in the main street. It has a real country feel about it, as you would expect, and is well presented and maintained.



The main street of Healesville.

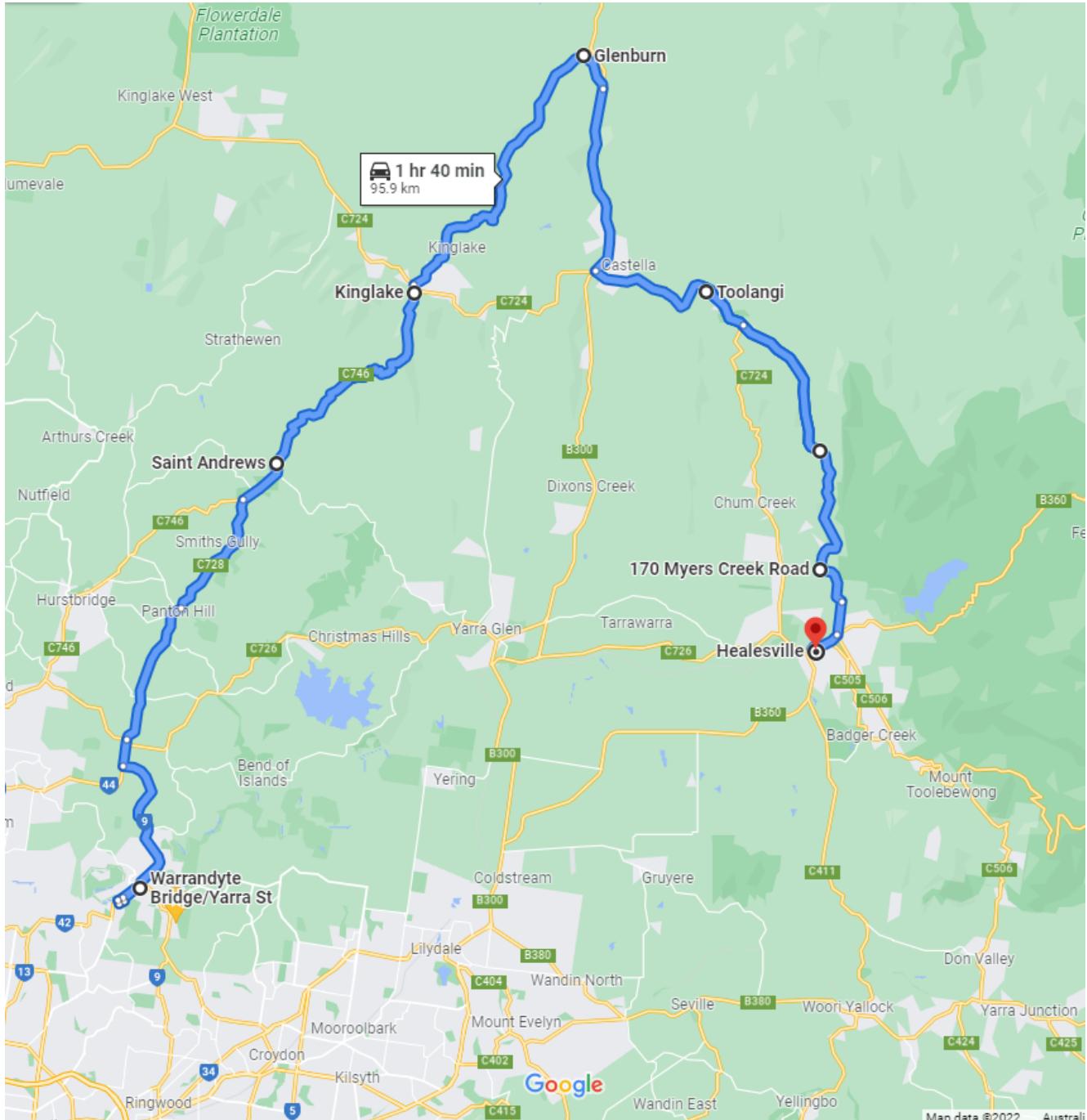
A visit to the town allows Melburnians a chance to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city and enjoy the unhurried atmosphere of the main street with its wide footpaths and indoor and outdoor café seating. I must admit however, that on public holidays or weekends, there are generally too many people there for my liking and some of that relaxed country atmosphere is lost. However, on weekdays it is a different story with few people other than the locals and relatively little traffic to disturb the laid-back feeling of the town. That's when I like to visit Healesville.



The main street of Healesville.

Healesville has other things to see besides the cafes and restaurants. It has the famous Healesville Sanctuary, which is a zoo of native Australian animals. That's where I saw my first (and only) platypus. We took our children there a few times when they were young, as the zoo is excellent for learning about, and seeing, native Australian animals in their natural environment. There you will see kangaroos, koalas, birds, platypuses, snakes and all sorts of native Australian animals. The staff are very knowledgeable and you can learn so much. If ever you visit Melbourne, a trip to the Healesville Sanctuary is well worth it. By car it is just about 1 hour and 15 minutes away from the city.

<https://www.zoo.org.au/healesville>



A map showing my route from Warrandyte near my home in Melbourne to Healesville outside Melbourne – a distance of 95.9km. This is the way a keen motorcyclist goes to get to Healesville.

However, when riding my motorcycle, my aim in visiting Healesville is not to get there by the most direct route. Instead, I am looking for scenic back roads and especially those with corners and curves. That's where the joy of motorcycling lies, in my opinion. So from my starting point of Warrandyte, a small village near my home on the edge of the

city, I head for Saint Andrews, a distance of around 27 kilometres.

While still quite close to Melbourne, this area is very interesting and slightly hilly. The properties are mostly small sized farms where people have horses, fruit orchards, grape vines and assorted hobby farming activities. I would say that a large number of these properties are owned by people who may be retired and who just want some extra space to move, rather than being cramped up in a city suburb. I must admit that idea also appeals to me but I suspect these properties are very expensive. The houses are usually quite elaborate and look well built.

Just past Saint Andrews, a small village where there is a very good community market on the weekend (see Podcast 129), I start to head up into the hills towards a town called Kinglake which is at around 550 metres above sea level. The road to Kinglake climbs upwards along the sides of the hills, twisting and turning as it goes. This road is so twisty that we call it 'The Steps'. The speed limit is 60 kmph and for good reason. There are many very sharp corners which makes it an excellent road for motorcyclists. However, you have to concentrate very hard on the road, judging each corner and making sure you keep on your side of the white line, as there is often oncoming traffic. This section of my journey is around 13 kilometres.

Kinglake is quite a lively small town of around 1500 people. It was devastated by a massive bushfire in 2009, which I talk about in Podcast 23. It has long since been rebuilt and has thrived since then. From Kinglake, I then head on a back road which goes down through thick forest to join up with a major highway called the Melba Highway, named after one of Australia's greatest female opera singers from the late 1800s and early 1900s, Dame Nellie Melba. She became world famous at that time and I plan to talk about her remarkable career in a later podcast. Riding through this forest is also one of my

favourite rides, because the top part of the road is very twisting and is great fun on a motorcycle. Because it goes through quite thick eucalypt forest, I have to watch out for leaf and twig litter on the corners, which can be problematic on a motorcycle if you are not careful. I am always watchful on this road but I enjoy it none the less. This road is around 13 kilometres long.

Once on the Melba Highway, I turn right and head towards the turn off for Healesville, around 7 kilometres away. The Melba Highway is an important regional highway and is quite busy with other traffic, so that's a time to be watching out for other cars and large trucks.

When I reach the turnoff, I turn left and head towards Healesville. On the way I pass through a small village called Toolangi, which has a population of 344 people.



The main street of the small village of Toolangi.

From Toolangi to Healesville, there is only 17 kilometres left to get to Healesville, but this stretch of road is probably my favourite motorcycling road in Victoria. It is my favourite road for two reasons. Firstly, it goes through a very beautiful forest, with huge trees and very large ferns which grow right up to the edge of the road. It is a delight. Secondly, the road has lots of corners and nearly all the corners have plenty of positive camber or slope, which means that a motorcycle can go around each corner at a reasonable speed in a safe fashion.



The forest and the ferns on the way from Toolangi to Healesville.

The speed limit starts off at 100kmph and then drops to 80kmph as the corners increase.



The ferns are a beautiful sight as you ride through the forest from Toolangi to Healesville.

At this speed, riding this wonderful road is a joy. I have included a Gopro video on this website, which you may be interested to watch. I think it gives quite a good feel of

what it is like to ride this road. Please click the link below.

Once I reach Healesville, it is time to visit my favourite bakery, the Wild Grains Bakery, where I can enjoy a coffee and a small pack of freshly made mixed sandwiches. The best part is chatting with my friends as we sip our coffee and watch the world go by.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 135 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

- Play activities = things to do
- Play appeals = (here) when you like something

- Play assorted = different types
- Play country = (here) outside of the big cities
- Play cramped = (here) to be very close to others
- Play delight = something which makes you happy
- Play destination = the place you are going to on a trip or journey
- Play devastated = (here) when things are destroyed
- Play disturb = when something or someone makes you stop what you are doing
- Play elaborate = (here) with many different features, not simple
- Play environment = the natural world, or a part of it, in which we live
- Play eucalypt = a type of tree found in Australia (see podcast number 101)
- Play expect = when you think something will happen in the future
- Play extends = goes further, goes longer
- Play head for = to go towards a place
- Play head on = to go onwards towards a place
- Play head towards = to go towards a place
- Play head up = to go upward (uphill)
- Play hustle and bustle = an expression meaning the loud noise, crowds and traffic of the city
- Play join up = (here) to meet with

- Play judging = (here) to look at something and make decisions about it
- Play knowledgeable = when someone knows a lot about a topic
- Play laid-back = easy going, relaxed, no stress
- Play litter = things left lying on the ground, or in this case, on the road
- Play lively = when there is lots of things happening
- Play locals = people who live and work in a place
- Play main street = the biggest street in a town, where all the large buildings and businesses are
- Play maintained = when things are well looked after, in good condition and clean
- Play oncoming = coming towards you
- Play opera = a type of theatre where the players sing their lines
- Play outskirts = on the edge
- Play peak = the top of a hill or mountain
- Play picturesque = beautiful to look at. Usually used when looking at a view outside
- Play presented = when something is being shown to other people
- Play previously = earlier, in the past
- Play properties = buildings, usually more than just a house
- Play ranges = a group of large hills or mountains
- Play regional = away from the cities

- Play relaxed = when there is no stress
- Play remarkable = very good, very successful
- Play route = the way that you go when you take a journey or a trip
- Play sanctuary = a place where people and animals are protected
- Play scenery = what you can see when you look around you
- Play scenic = when the land is beautiful to look at
- Play section = part
- Play slightly = a little bit
- Play suspect = (here) when you think something is true, but you are not sure
- Play thrived = when things are active with many things happening
- Play twisty = when things twist and turn (the same as twisting)
- Play unhurried atmosphere = when things are happening slowly, without stress
- Play variety = different types
- Play watchful = when you look at something very carefully
- Play well-wooded = with lots of trees and plants
- Play white line = the line painted in the middle of the road