

## Fast Facts



### Start/Finish

The trail officially begins approximately 500m west of Ring Road at the junction of the former Ballarat to Skipton and Melbourne to Serviceton railway lines.

Due to construction of the **Ballarat Western Link Road**, it is recommended that trail users begin at public access point **2 Remembrance Drive** (Avenue of Honour). It is anticipated that the link will be completed by November 2014.

### Alternative starting points

- Skipton Station Ground, Station Street
- Ballarat Railway Station, Lydiard Street North
- Wendouree Railway Station, 1225 Howitt Street
- Any of the Public Access Points or road crossings.

### Distance

The rail trail is 53kms one way. The ride to the trailhead from Ballarat CBD adds another 8kms.

### Public Access

Walkers, cyclists and horse riders may use the trail. Users should stay within the reserve boundaries.

### Trail surface

Unsealed; crushed granite sand that may become boggy when wet. A mountain bike or hybrid bike with 30mm tyres is recommended.

### Difficulty

A moderate grade ride with a few gradual climbs and descents. The trail crosses numerous minor roads and the Glenelg Highway several times.

## Additional Information



### Further Information

Ballarat – Skipton Rail Trail Committee

- **City of Ballarat**  
[www.ballarat.vic.gov.au](http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au) | Tel. (03) 5320 5500
- **Golden Plains Shire**  
[www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au](http://www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au) | Tel. (03) 5281 1202
- **Ballarat Visitor Information Centre**  
[www.visitballarat.com.au](http://www.visitballarat.com.au) | Tel. 1800 44 66 33
- **Ballarat Bicycle Users Group (BalBUG)**  
[www.balbug.net](http://www.balbug.net)
- **Ballarat-Skipton Rail Trail**  
[www.ballaratskiptonrailtrail.com](http://www.ballaratskiptonrailtrail.com)

### Community websites

- [www.ballarat.com/smythesdale/index.htm](http://www.ballarat.com/smythesdale/index.htm)
- [www.skiptonaustralia.org.au](http://www.skiptonaustralia.org.au)
- [www.lintoncommunity.com](http://www.lintoncommunity.com)

# Ballarat–Skipton Rail Trail



## Introduction to the trail



To enjoy a bike ride without having to worry about sharing the ride with traffic, head for the Ballarat – Skipton Rail Trail. This is an unsealed trail for walkers, cyclists and horse riders that follows the line of the former Ballarat to Skipton railway.

The line operated between 1883 and 1985. It was developed as a link between the gold towns west of Ballarat and the surrounding pastoral region. Initially the line out of Ballarat reached Scarsdale, then Linton before it was eventually extended to Skipton.

Today the Ballarat – Skipton Rail Trail provides an interesting and informative 53km journey. Enjoy wide open grasslands, eucalypt forest, historic bridges and attractive nineteenth century towns along the trail. Check the information signs at each of the former railway stations for local information.

There are three access points in Ballarat; on the Ring Road as it crosses the railway line, off Blind

Creek Road and off the Avenue of Honour in Cardigan. You can join the trail at any of the settlements along the route.

To walk or ride the trail from Ballarat to Skipton and back to Ballarat is a long way. To make a weekend of it, overnight accommodation is available in Smythesdale, Scarsdale, Linton and Skipton.

The trail was completely resurfaced in 2008, rendering it smooth, but it can get muddy.



## Significant dates for the Ballarat – Skipton Railway (1862–1985):

- 1862** Unsuccessful proposal to lay a tramway to Linton.
- Late 1870's** Haddon - Smythesdale - Scarsdale population estimated at 16,300. Provision made for a railway in the Railway Construction Act of 1880.
- 1882** Contract signed for construction of Ballarat to Scarsdale line for a sum of £25,779.
- 1883** Formal opening of line to Scarsdale including intermediate stations at Haddon, Smythesdale, Scarsdale.
- 1889** Linton railway lobbyists succeeded in having an extension to the Scarsdale railway included in the 1884 Railway Act.
- 1889** Opening of Cardigan passenger station.
- 1890** Contract signed for construction of the Scarsdale to Linton line for a sum of £52,256.
- 1890** Opening of Newtown Station with the beginning of the Scarsdale Linton line.
- 1890** Scarsdale passenger journeys totalled more than 20,000 annually.
- 1890** Opening of the Happy Valley and Linton stations.
- 1891** Extension of railway to Linton via Newtown opened nine months behind schedule due to wet weather and a dispute about the final location of the Linton station. Intermediate stations were provided at Newtown and Happy Valley. The line was officially opened by the Chief Secretary, the Hon. Alfred Deakin (later Australian Prime Minister).
- 1896** Closure of Scarsdale as a staff and ticket station.



- 1911** Ballarat to Colac (via Cressy) railway line opens as an extension of the Ballarat – Skipton line from Newtown.
- 1914** Commencement of work on the Linton to Skipton section of line (works were costed at £65,000). One intermediate station was provided at Pittong.
- 1915** Opening of the Ballast Siding – to obtain ballast from the tailings of the Golden Lake mine – closing a year or two later.
- 1916** Extension of line from Linton to Skipton officially opened.
- 1920** A Royal Train carrying the Prince of Wales travelled between Colac and Ballarat.
- 1931–32** Reduced passenger use of line as a result of the Depression, stagnation in world commodity markets and competition from road transport.
- 1931** Withdrawal of the train crew and station master at the Skipton station. Skipton station reduced to caretaker status.
- 1934** A Royal Train carrying the Duke of Gloucester travelled between Colac and Ballarat.
- 1953** Smythes Creek bridge destroyed by fire resulting in the line beyond Newtown being closed for several months while the bridge was re-built.
- 1954** Closure of Nintingbool station.
- 1970** Closure of Cardigan Station.
- 1973** Establishment of the kaolin plant at Pittong, resulting in a revival of freight use along the line.
- 1975** Introduction of the Melbourne to Hamilton road coach service (calling at Linton and Skipton).
- 1976** Closure of the Ballarat – Linton motor rail passenger service. The railway then operated a freight only service until its closure.
- 1976** Closure of the Happy Valley Station.
- 1977** Closure of Kopke, Scarsdale & Haddon stations.
- 1979** Regular Ballarat – Skipton freight trains ceased with the opening of the Ballarat Freight Centre. Seasonal grain traffic and kaolin loading were handled as required.
- 1985** Closure of the Ballarat – Skipton railway line on September 27, 1985.

