



The Oxley Highway, number 34, is real Ducati country

RATING	This is how good motorcycling can be – if you're competent but not overconfident.
MAP REF	Map 29, H8 – K12
START/END	Bendemeer, Wauchope
DISTANCE	224km
INFORMATION	Walcha (02) 6777 1075, Port Macquarie 1800 025 935

## Two-wheeler's paradise

Thomas Appleton reckoned that 'Good Americans, when they die, go to Paris'. Well, I say, good motorcyclists, when they die, go to **Gingers Creek**.

You won't see it on maps but something approaching its location is usually indicated as Myrtle Scrub, or is it Yarrowitch? This fabulous place is a small café and service station, with limited but very pleasant accommodation attached. It has the delightful fortune of being roughly halfway along the really good part of the Oxley Highway, which in turn stretches from Walcha to Wauchope.

Peacock-infested Gingers Creek is motorcycle-friendly to the point of being booked out by them on many weekends. Admittedly, most of them are trail riders who find the surrounding forests, with their many tracks, irresistible. But road riders are rarely far away, because the Oxley is famous.

Every one of the approaches is a terrific bike road. Thunderbolt's Way, which takes you up to Walcha from Gloucester, is now fully tarred and offers both great riding and beautiful scenery. You'll be pleased to know that it finally made it into this book!

But nothing quite matches the Oxley itself, or at least the stretch we are talking about. Heading east from **Walcha** you first spend some kilometres on the flat New England plateau. It's not wasted time though, because this is mostly beautifully-surfaced road with huge, wide, sweeping corners and long, high-speed whoopdies (that's the road equivalent of a rollercoaster) under a big, big sky.

You will know it when you reach the next stage, which is the thickly-forested scarp of the range. With Gingers Creek in the middle, this takes you down to the beginning of the Hastings River valley. Along the way there is what can seem like an endless procession of tight and demanding, but rarely-surprising, corners. The blokes who look after this road for the shire are motorcyclists themselves, so they make sure there's very little loose gravel. If you can take your eyes off the road there are some great views too, especially across the valley.

The final stage is along the Hastings River, where the road leapfrogs over the many ridges running down to the water. This is another wonderful, and quite different, experience with the welcoming Long Flat pub along the way.

Now go back and do it again. Everyone else does.

Where the road tackles the escarpment of the Great Dividing Range the riding really could not be any better.

