



Bells Line of Road sweeps across the Blue Mountains with few interruptions, unlike the Great Western Highway to its south.

RATING	A lovely smooth ride between two stretches of excitement.
MAP REF	Map 24, B7 – C2
START/END	Richmond, Lithgow
DISTANCE	82km
INFORMATION	Hawkesbury (02) 4588 5895, Lithgow (02) 6353 1859, Blue Mountains NP (02) 4787 8877

Ringling the Bells

It's about 100km from Richmond, in Sydney's west, to Lithgow, across the Blue Mountains. Today it's a matter of an hour on a reasonable bike, but spare a thought for government surveyor Bell who had to build the road.

Even though it's all up on a great sandstone plateau, and he didn't have to cope with the cliffs once he was up there (until he got to the other end, anyway) it would have been a heartbreakingly difficult job. Of course now all the

The small township of Mt Wilson makes a pleasant stopover, just four kilometres off the main road.



gullies and spurs that had Bell tearing out his hair make the road all the more interesting for riders. So make no mistake, just because Bells Line of Road officially traverses a plateau does not mean it's flat.

The road hugs the northern edge of the Grose Valley, and to its north again are the gullies running down to the Colo River. There is some settlement along the road, although it is far less crowded than the Great Western Highway, which is on the next ridge across the Grose Valley. Once the main industry, and pretty much the only one, was growing apples. These days, tourism is rapidly gaining ground. But we don't care about that. We are just riding by, on an excellent road that takes us through some impressive scenery as well.

At the eastern end of the road it's a bit suburban until you're past **Kurmond**, and there's a speed camera at **Kurrajong Heights**. The western end is in bush right up to the city limits of Lithgow. Mount Tomah Botanic Garden and the quiet township of **Mt Wilson** are worth a stop. Both spots look great in autumn, when the leaves of their European trees show colour.

The most exciting bits of the road are at the ends too. At **Lithgow** there's a great little collection of corners culminating in the steep slope of the last right-hander into town. Between Kurmond and Kurrajong Heights it's the hairpins of Bellbird Hill.

Bells Line of Road is the preferred route to the west, to Bathurst and beyond, for many Sydney motorcyclists. Unfortunately, I've never found anything along this road to match the excellent cafés of Leura, on the main highway. However, you can stop for an apple pie and a basic coffee at one of the fruit barns in **Bilpin**.