

NEW ZEALAND DISTANCE RIDERS



Setting NZDR Routes

As a traveller in NZ and in particular, when doing distance rides, having a GPS is an invaluable tool to have, but, I can't stress the value of 'Local Knowledge'!

I got my first GPS (a Garmin 660) leading up to the 2011 TT2000, because I was riding with 'Jantar' that year, who at that time lived in Alexandra, and our plan to achieve a 'Gold' ride, which meant riding a 1,550Km Saturday and a 1,350Km Sunday with a total of 30 checkpoints.

Although at this point in my riding, I had completed 5 Rusty Nut 'Grand Challenges' (1,000 milers), 4 C1KC's (Capital 1,000 Km Cruises) and the previous year's TT2000, this ride blew away any thought of using my old method of pinning notes to the dash, which wouldn't cut the mustard at night, plus the sheer scale of the ride and being over a multitude of strange roads in the South Island. So I was wrenched into the 21 centuryand still spent 2 months of serious planning and emails to come up with a plan!

That year, the start was out of Dunedin at 0600 on Saturday, and straight off the bat, Jantar used his local knowledge to bypass about 4 sets of lights, which hastened our departure from the city and ensured we didn't get obstructed in any crowds at the first couple of CP's and since then I've been a convert, enjoying music from the GPS, whilst getting turn warnings 1km out and again on approach, with updates on ETA's, Distance Travelled, Distance to go, Distance to next CP, Overall and Moving Avg speeds, etc. Basically, with a good system and good planning, one can focus on their riding and that's gold!

After I got the GPS though, once or twice I experienced where I had opted for a route, but was beaten to destinations 'by locals'! So even though we can set for 'Avoidances' (eg unsealed roads) and use route options like 'Shortest Distance' vs 'Fastest Time', it was reinforced to me that the benefit of 'Local Knowledge' can count for everything.

Where's this leading you might ask?

Well, in establishing a valid route for our NZDR rides, we have a process, whereby, we come up with a general idea of roads we want to ride, or destinations we want to go to, dial them into the Routing Software with start and finish points, then add or remove Kms to make it fit our requirements (ie 1,609 Km = 1.000 miles). This would normally be done with the setting on Faster Time.

With that done, we then check the route by changing the settings to include gravel and opt for Shortest Distance, this will then determine where we may need to place checkpoints.

Another thing that happens most years, is that we end up applying shaping, or via points, that aren't CP's! For example, when setting a route Nth out of Turangi, if we set for Putaruru, the route will default to go via Taupo (138Km in 1:33) so I will bend it to go via the Western Lake (supposedly 141Km in 1:56), but come on, this is a reasonably good highway where one can comfortably sit at

"Are we there yet?"

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the stated limit, plus it has enough sweepy corners that keep one focused and make the road and ride, more interesting, so I can't believe that travelling 3 extra Km on this road, in light traffic, as opposed to riding on SH1, in traffic, via many 80 & 50kph zones, with a plethora of double-yellows can supposedly take an extra 23 mins!??

Another example of this would be Waihi to Tauranga along SH2, which is always chock full of dawdling traffic, sitting on 80kph, with double-yellows along most of it. I avoid it like the plague and much prefer taking old Te Aroha-Gordon Rd on the other side of the Kaimais, so it is also unlikely that I would set a route from Waihi to Whakatane, but if I did I would probably have a CP to ensure riders go where I want.

Another example in the Wellington area would be the Akatarawa Rd from Upper Hutt to Waikanae. Most bikers would only use it once every 10-20 yearswhen it reminds them why they don't use it! ...and although on the first NI1600 in 2014, we didn't exclude this alternative with a CP on the Paekak' Hill road back then, now we would have to, to comply with the IBA routing requirements (since we offer riders the opportunity to qualify for their Saddle Sore ride status), but the point being, that local knowledge on New Zealand roads can count for a lot when selecting a route, or what roads to use on a route.

The reason for bringing all this up is, that over the past few years, we have noticed that some riders often opt to travel on SH1 via Taupo, or along other such tracks where we have 'shaped' the route to avoid them. Basically, our attitude is that, if riders choose to do this, they aren't compromising their Distance Travelled, (because we will have buffered for it), but it will be affecting their time and most likely their enjoyment of the ride. Look at the route offered and don't blindly trust your GPS to offer the optimum route option! We provide you with a Prescribed Route, Instructions and a Track, which reflect our recommendation for the best ride and experience and on some occasions, we may even mention possible alternatives.

So, while our recommended route may not be routable directly within the GPS, it's provided to give you a visual steer on where we want you to go - so this screed has been written to suggest, see if you can learn how to make use of the instructions given. Why not experiment with past ride reveal packs and see how best you can use that content to get a properly shaped route within your GPS? Who knows, you might encounter some new roads, enhance your enjoyment on an NZDR ride and discover that Godzone offers many ways to skin that cat!?

Enjoy the Ride,
LJS – Creator of Routes

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