

ONLINE OFF ROAD TOURS NOW ECO ACCREDITED



Honda Australia backed Online Off Road Tours are helping motorcyclists become environmentally conscientious with their recent recognition as the first Victorian off road motorcycle tour operator to be Eco Certified with Eco Tourism Australia.

As part of the accreditation process, Online Off Road Tours put a microscope to the way in which their events are held to ensure that they complied with best practice.

According to Online's Ride Coordinator Rod Lay, they looked at ways in which they could minimise the harm caused to both the environment and the local communities.

"It is a sensible and timely opportunity to take the professionalism of our tour operation to the next level," he said.

"Off road motorcycling is in the government spotlight at the moment and not for all the right reasons. Growing bike sales, an expanding population and other factors have created conflict between many riders and our communities, particularly with those who ride in urban fringe areas as well as other forest users."

"I believe that the motorcycling industry needs to work closely with our forest managers to ensure the future of our sport. It is imperative that tour operators set strong positive examples for all riders."

Online Off Road tours adopted Eco guidelines and put them into practice, leading to the much deserved accreditation.

Their common sense principles include an undertaking not to use - nor promote the use of - excessively noisy exhausts, not to ride off road on a virgin single trail, to take home all rubbish, recycle waste oils and provide riders who smoke with small disposable ashtrays so as not to litter the bush with butts.

“Noise is a huge problem right now. In our helmets, our bikes don’t seem too loud, but to a bushwalker or horse rider, they are offensive and sometimes frightening,” Rod explained.

“Less noise is the way to go. The industry, including manufacturers and Motorcycling Australia, are moving towards quieter bikes, which is great.”

“With modern technology, we no longer need loud exhausts anyway; a loud bike is generally not faster, just louder.”

Single trail use is also considered to be another big problem. “Our forest managers hate us using it, as it causes erosion and stream degradation,” Rod said.

“Some of it is right under their noses in popular parts of the Alpine National Park, which in my mind is irresponsible behaviour by those involved.”

“We now undertake to use only existing tracks, avoiding illegal trails. It’s more work for us to locate and maintain quality tracks, but the overall quality of our tours is not compromised and in the long run it will pay off.”

“It’s a privilege to be able to access the fantastic network of tracks we ride and we want to ensure that our activities are sustainable for the future.”

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is also supporting operators such as Online Tours through their Trail Bike Initiative.

“It may surprise many riders, but the DSE have openly thrown their cards on the table and asked for our help to minimize the problems we can cause,” Rod noted.

“They don’t want to shut us out, just to address the problems. It makes great sense for us to take proactive steps now, to form strong partnerships with our forest managers and promote sensible riding practices for all current and future riders.”

Online’s guidelines can be viewed at www.onlinemotorcycles.com.au.



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