

Climb categories

We've adopted the European climbing categories for the rides in this guide. The formula for rating climbs is based on the climb length and the overall altitude gain. It goes like this:

Take the average gradient (height in metres ÷ distance in metres × 100 = percent gradient) and square it, add 1, then multiply that by the distance in kilometres.

A category 4 climb is the easiest level; from there, the climbs work their way up to category 1, which is guaranteed to be a tough workout. Beyond that is the feared 'hors category' (beyond categorisation) – brutal, knee-grinding monsters that command respect.

Here are some examples:

Category 4 (35–79 points)

Happy Valley (Wellington), Titirangi Road (from New Lynn, Auckland)

Category 3 (80–179 points)

Evans Pass (Christchurch), Ngauranga Gorge (Wellington)

Category 2 (180–249 points)

Dyers Pass (Lyttelton side), Moonshine Road (Upper Hutt side)

Category 1 (250–599 points)

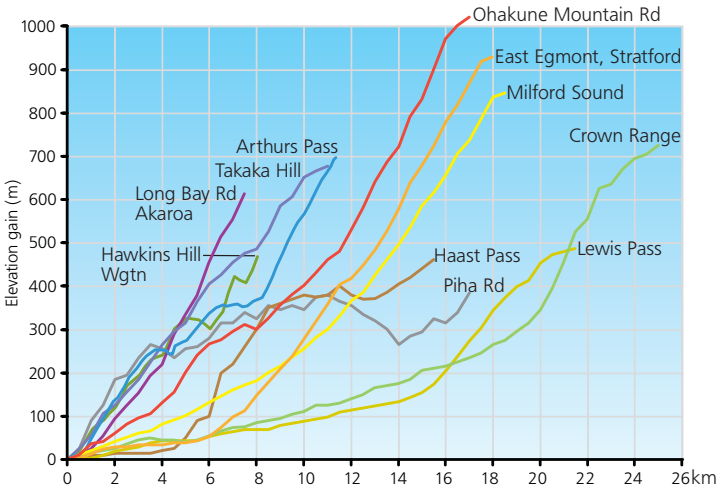
Hawkins Hill (Wellington), Takaka Hill (Nelson) and Crown Range (Queenstown)

Hors category (over 600 points)

New Zealand only has one sealed road that is a recognised hors category: 1000 m of climbing in 17 km up the Ohakune Mountain Road.

New Zealand also has several unsealed hors category climbs including Mt Fyffe (Kaikoura), Waiorau Snow Farm Road (Cardrona) and the Remarkables Ski Field Road (Queenstown).

New Zealand's toughest climbs



Ride gradings

Ride gradings are determined by several factors, including ride length, difficulty of the climbs and surface of the road. There are three main categories.

Easy Ride From 20 to 40 kilometres with no significant hills, these rides can be enjoyed by anyone who is familiar with riding a bike.

Moderate Ride These 40 to 80 kilometre missions will take time to work up to. But once you're fit, they're not at all arduous, unless you're racing.

Hard Ride Take these rides seriously. They aim to test you. Some are organised events over 100 kilometres long, and even after a few months of training, they're sure to test your mettle.

As well as these three categories, we've included a '**crusy ride**' option, which offers an almost traffic-free ride on flat cycle paths or quiet roads – ideal for beginners and family groups.

Terms we've used

To differentiate between vertical and horizontal metres in the ride descriptions, we've used 'm' when referring to vertical height and 'metres' for horizontal distance.

AADT refers to the Annual Average Daily Traffic volumes, which are measured by the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) on all state highways. Examples are given below:

AADT	Motor traffic	Typical situation
0	None	Dedicated cycle paths
1–1000	Low	Minor country roads
1000–10,000	Medium	Most provincial highways
10,000–20,000	High	Much of highways 1 and 2
20,000+	Very high	Highways around major cities

It should be noted that if a road has, say, 1000 cars on it over a 24-hour period, you won't see 1000 cars, unless you are on that road for 24 hours! If you are only on the road for a few hours, training early in the morning, you may see less than 100.

Trains, planes, buses and ferries

If you're short on time, want to do a through trip or simply prefer not to drive, the best way to get to and from a ride is by public transport.

Contact details

KiwiRail (train) and Interislander (ferry)	0800 802 802
Bluebridge (ferry)	0800 844 844
Air New Zealand	0800 737 000
Auckland trains and ferries	09 366 6400
or 0800 103 080 if you are outside the Auckland calling area.	
Wellington commuter trains	04 801 7000
Christchurch public transport (buses & ferries)	03 366 8855

Bike bags

A bike bag usually gets your machine on long-haul buses, trains and ferries for free! Use a hard one, as soft material bike bags

will not provide enough protection. Alternatively, a bike box from a local bike shop will do the job.

Fees for unbagged bikes

Some ferries and trains, and most buses, charge \$10–15 for an unbagged bike. Wellington commuter trains don't charge for bikes, but space can be limited – first in, first served. Auckland trains charge \$1. Don't rely on peak-time commuter trains to have space.

Some commuter buses in Christchurch and on Waiheke Island carry bikes for free. Bikes are free on most Auckland ferries.

The **Interislander** ferry charges \$15 for a bike. **Bluebridge Cook Strait Ferries** charge \$10 for a bike, but they waive the fee for members of the New Zealand cycling advocacy group RideStrong (see www.ridestrong.org.nz). You'll be required to walk your bike on and off these ferries.

Air New Zealand does not charge for bikes but does charge for your second bag or item (\$15 for a bag up to 25 kg). They expect you to pack your bike well, or at least wrap the chain and cogs in newspaper, remove the pedals and turn the handlebars. They may also ask you to partially deflate your tyres.

Budget airlines will charge an arm and a leg!

The cost of travel

Like most human activities, the sport of road cycling is impacted by the rising cost of fuel. The Automobile Association (AA) estimates that an average-sized car costs 74 cents per km to run. A large or fully loaded car is more than \$1 per km. Landcare Research estimated that an average car will emit one tonne of CO₂ for every 4000 km driven – larger cars emit more.

To reduce costs and emissions, pack your bikes inside your car and share your trip with others. Also check the public transport options. And the best solution? Cycle to and from the ride.