

PRO RIDER

WEATHER TO RIDE?

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Do you like riding in the rain, or are you a fair-weather rider who will only venture out if there's not a cloud to be seen? Knowing where to look can enable you to make an informed decision before you even stick your head out of the garage door.

Riding in the rain
can still be fun.



A common response to customers getting in touch having seen a dodgy weather forecast is ‘well, you can actually learn a lot riding in the rain’. This is true, and whilst this piece is not specifically about wet weather riding techniques – which in summary are to stay calm and relaxed on a well-prepared bike with good tyres and wearing decent kit – it can be useful to know what sort of conditions we might be heading into. Being prepared for the weather is as important as any other of our pre-ride checks.

Dan the man, Renee, or Ingrid and Alex on the other channel will give you a decent steer after the TV news, but their forecast will be pretty general, and it can benefit us to be more specific. We have a state-sponsored meteorological service in the not so surprisingly titled MetService New Zealand. MetService is contracted by the government as the only authorised provider of severe weather warnings, public safety weather notices, and weather information for aviation, so it’s a pretty good bet they work hard to get things right.

In fact, MetService turns out a ton of data which would take us to a mid-afternoon snack if we tried to digest it all with our bowl of warming breakfast porridge. Fortunately, there are a couple of ready-made solutions for us bikers. First off, the NZ Weather App for both Android and iPhone is a simple source of information about all things weather. You can plug in your favourite locations and hey presto get a briefing for the day, a 3 or 10-day forecast. And if you want to go into detail, it will let you mine down into the rain radar with its 7 and half minute predictions and 2 hourly wind, temperature and rainfall for the next 48 hours; phew! For the

super lazy it will even grab your location from your phone’s GPS and knock out an instant forecast where you are, although that’s a bit limiting as we have now left lockdown and can ride further than around the house and down to the shops.

Another useful MetService freebie is the Weekend Weather Email service. As the name implies, you set up a personalised forecast with locations of interest and popping into your inbox every Thursday afternoon will be a summary of what to expect on your ride. Great for anyone who just goes for a Sunday afternoon blast or weekend road trip, but anyone riding all week can stick with the 10-day outlook although that can be a bit depressing when grey clouds are showing for its entirety. You can even get a ‘powder watch’ alert if you really want to be a domestic tourist and head away to the slopes. All these MetService goodies are easy to find and download from their website: www.metservice.com

I have to admit, much as I trust dear old MetService, I do like a bit of a cross-reference with another reputable forecaster. I have managed to get out of the habit of checking every forecast available to find the ‘right one’ to cheer me up as I head out to ride, but it can be reassuring to have a squizz elsewhere, particularly if the information is presented in a really neat way. My recommendation is Yr – the joint online weather service from the Norwegian Meteorological Institute and the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation. I know what you’re thinking – what good is a weather service from a country almost 18 000km away when I’m setting out on my ride here in NZ? Well, just like our own MetService, Yr crunches data from established computer models generated from

tracking weather patterns for years and able to make decent predictions which are then finessed by real human meteorologists (by the way Dan Corbett is actually an experienced one of these despite his attempts at entertaining us on TVNZ). The nice thing about Yr is the way they line up the temperature, rain, sun, wind in neat little charts with what I have found to be a quite accurate hourly forecast. And yes, there is an App sitting there in Google Play / Apple Store for your free download. You can also get stuck into a wealth of information on their website too at: www.yr.no although you may want to brush up on your Norwegian until you do your first search for an NZ location after which it will remember to talk to you in English!

Finally, whilst I do agree with the ‘you can learn a lot riding in the rain’ mantra, the conditions which make me sit up and think are pouring rain with full-on wind, especially if gusting. My ideal source of guidance here is another great App from Windy – available from the usual places. As the name suggests, this gives a nice graphical presentation of the likelihood of you getting blown across the motorway, and there is a comprehensive web option too at: www.windy.com

So, there you have it, there will always be weather, and whether or not to ride, come rain or shine is up to you. But learning something in the wet can be fun along with finding out that it might not be as bad as you think with the help of MetService, Yr and Windy dot com. ■■■

