

Cyclists retrace trail

THOUSANDS may have trodden the historic Golden Trail before them, but this simply adds to the attraction for a group of Bendigo cyclists who will retrace the journey on its 150th anniversary.

Fourteen Bendigo cyclists are this week riding the historic 540 km route from Robe to Bendigo, where up to 16,000 Chinese gold seekers found their way to the central Victorian goldfields.

St Luke's Anglicare chief executive David Pugh, who will lead the Bendigo Bicycle Users Group tour, said the route was the key access for Chinese prospectors after Port Phillip imposed a prohibitive £10 (\$20) tax to discourage Asian miners.

"This was one of the biggest migrations of people in this country's history," he said.

Undeterred, the Chinese came in droves and faced more than the tyranny of distance, he said.

The travellers were forced to mark trees with Chinese characters along the route as navigational aids after being swindled and abandoned by some white guides.

Mr Pugh said one of the riders with a Chinese background might even be travelling the same path as her ancestors.

But he said their six-day journey through the Coonawarra region and the Grampians hopefully



FAMILY FUN: Kade, 4, Peter, Erin and Jaz, 6, Hutcheson of Golden Square enjoy cycling.

would not be plagued by the same problems or hardship.

"We intend to ride in the morning and do things like visit the wineries in the afternoon," Mr Pugh said.

"We won't be doing it too rough. We're staying in hotels and cabins

and we have made sure we've got a massage booked in Halls Gap.

"And I have calculated that there is up to a 90 per cent chance of south-westerlies, so we can grab those tail winds."

Bendigo BUG is hoping the tour will become an annual event,

attracting more and more riders to the region and highlighting the goldfields' rich history.

In keeping with the historic nature of the route, the group will finish the ride at Bendigo's Golden Dragon Museum at 1 pm on Sunday. — EUGENE DUFFY