

# HOW TO: RIDE A CROWNED GRAVEL ROAD



**CAPTION  
ABOUT SLEDGING?**



**MAKE THE TYRE SIDE KNOBS  
WORK FOR YOU**

I can imagine for most people that loose or chunky gravel is something that conjures up the "fear and loathing in Vegas" or Karapoti, Coromandel, Alpine Epic etc, etc... basically, the stuff is loose and unpredictable.

Well. Here are a few tips that really do help.

Firstly, you need to learn how to read the camber of the road because riding "off-camber" gravel is one of the scariest surfaces you will find. Check out the picture, you can see an obvious crown or curve on the road. This is to allow the water to run off the road rather than forming puddles like we find on mountainbike tracks where the terrain is often nicely cambered to catch the rider and the rain...

I like to imagine a centreline down the middle of the crown dictating where I can and can't ride. So, if the road is turning to the left I do all of my turning within the left hand lane of the road (up to the line) and if the road is turning to the right then I need to be in the right hand lane. Gravel roads very rarely turn suddenly so you will have plenty of time to cross the centre line on a straight between corners. If the road is open to the public this will obviously need to be under review depending on line of sight.

Next you need to know how to get up on the side knobs of your tyres. If you are running slicks then there is not much we can say other than 'get some proper tyres!'. In fact, it's worth digressing for a moment on slick tyres: on the big epic races grip is as big a factor as rolling resistance. Most people struggle more on climbs from rear wheel loss of traction than sluggish tyres, and on the descents I doubt many people are rolling the whole descent without braking. Which is why a tyre with more tread will improve your time, by allowing your rear tyre to grip when climbing and by providing better control on the descents - hence less braking?

The side knobs on your tyres will grip much better than the centre of the tyre so you need to get the bike leant over a little and turning. This is done by making a small turn away from your intended direction which will tip the bike up on its edges and change the attitude of you and the bike from upright to leaning. You will now be turning and should feel quite safe making the turn. Once the turn is completed, roll out to the centre of the road, cross the centreline and head over to the opposite side ready to start again (again, only if the road is closed or you have clear line of sight).

The motto is;

Enter tight (e.g., in the inside wheel track)

Make a gentle turn out (maybe 1 foot in distance) to get the tyres up on the edges

Once turning complete the corner

Exit and cross centre line back to the wheel track on the inside of the next corner



**LEFT TURN COMPLETE, CROSSING THE CENTRELINE TO SET UP FOR THE RIGHT TURN**



**SMALL TURN AWAY FROM INTENDED DIRECTION TO INITIATE LEAN INTO THE CORNER**