

## **PART 8**

# Melbourne to Perth

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DECEMBER 2017 | 18 DAYS

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HOW MANY WIVES WOULD LET YOU FLY TO MELBOURNE ON BOXING DAY TO START A RIDE ACROSS AUSTRALIA? THANKS CAROL, THIS WILL BE AN AWESOME TRIP WITH MY MATE ROBIN COTTLE FROM LEVIN. HIS BIKE IS CURRENTLY IN SYDNEY.



2.30 am and I was off to Wellington Airport again to catch the 6.30 am flight. It bucketed down with rain all the way down and the roads were flooded. I rode around the barrier arms at the airport as usual to avoid the expensive car parking. On arrival my gear was soaking wet, and I didn't take a change as I have everything I need in Aussie already. My riding gear stays in my Gold Wing and I wear my shorts and tee shirt to Melbourne. This time I had a little problem, my shorts were soaked so it was a bit embarrassing walking around so I was in the toilet drying them in the hand dryer. I looked like Mr Bean but it did work. By 4.30 after the flight, a bus, a 1 ½ hour train, and short drive, I arrived at Willow Grove, Moe where my bike was already to go at my brothers house.

At 7 am on 27<sup>th</sup> I was away towards Sydney to meet Robin. My bro had given me a map to follow which took in some awesome adventure riding. Heyfield first to buy a new gas bottle, two

fold up chairs and a few cans of Irish Stew. Headed towards Dargo on nice twisty sealed roads and then a fantastic gravel road to the Alpine Highway and Mt Hotham ski field to take another photo. The road from there to Omeo, Mita Mita and Tallangatta was sealed and great for all types of bikes. Lots of push bikes riding up to Mt Hotham as well. I hadn't seen any wild life up until now but I was very conscious of something running out in front of me at any time. I was getting tired but I needed to meet Robin at 4 pm tomorrow so I kept riding to Bartlow, Tumut and tried to get to Wee Jasper but run out of daylight and the wildlife numbers had increased so I pitched my tent just off the road about 10 kms before Wee Jasper and heated up a tin of stew. Today was some of the best riding I had done.

On the bike by 6 am, riding carefully as the Roos and deer in this area were very large and I didn't really want to run over another one on this trip. Wee Jasper to Yass was through rolling farm land and nice country side. Watching out for Merino sheep as the roads were not fenced. Great twisty roads, nice scenery and another beautiful place to ride.

More fuel at Yass then left at Gunning to Crookwell, Laggan then Taralga which were more like the quiet country roads of New Zealand which I prefer. My brother suggested taking the 26 km detour at Richland to view the Wombeyan Caves and pay the



**1.** Laundry day. **2.** Excellent riding in this valley.  
**3.** Inside the Caves. **4.** Down the hill towards the Caves.

\$20 for a self-guided tour that should take about 40 minutes. I broke my jandals in the first five minutes so did it in bare feet in 20 minutes. Well worth the money. Back on the road to Oberon at 120 kms per hour and checked my emails at the DR Cafe then to Hampton where I met my mate Robin. It was only 4.30 pm and still time to get a few kms in before dark. The reason we met here was because I wanted him to ride the magnificent 7 km twisty road to the Jenolan Caves which I had done on a previous trip. It is one of those places that you must see in Aussie. Especially riding through the cave. Even if it's in the heat of summer or it's snowing outside, the caves are always 15 degrees. These are among the oldest and finest caves in the world with pure underground rivers and amazing limestone crystal formations. It was now 6 pm and we shouldn't be riding because of the wildlife but we were having so much fun we continued back to Oberon on more dirt roads to a little camp site at Trunkey Creek. \$10 each with



a shower and shelter. Boiled the Billy and heated up a tin of stew and things couldn't have been better until I got the fold up chairs out. I obviously didn't have my glasses on when I bought them as they were kids' chairs. They looked like big chairs from the picture. Bit of a tight fit on the arse and as I pushed down to get out of it I broke the arm rest. I'll take the other one home for Ruben (my grandson) who is one year old on New Year's Day.



Woke up early as we both do and Robin was not good. His sinuses were blocked and he didn't sleep and he needed antibiotics or something. We headed for Forbes hospital via Woodstock and a few good dirt roads. I mucked around on Facebook and emails at McDonalds for two hours waiting for Robin. Finally, this time we're off riding with no hitches, although I am with Robin Cottle and his friends know what I'm in for. We have done lots of riding together and I have at least one good story about every trip he has done.



I lead the way towards Condobolin and then RC decided to go in front to Lake Cargelligo. Well off he went for about 35 kms then he turned left and went for another 5 kms and turned left again as he hit a nice gravel road. Most riders know what happens when you keep turning left. I waited at the corner for a few minutes but he was off and wasn't looking back in the thick dust. 35 kms later he was parked on the side of the road with a big smile. "Wasn't that cool he said". Yeh Robin it was but now we are one kilometre from where we were 1 1/2 hours ago. Dumb arse. And he is the one with the good GPS. I'm not too hopeful of getting him to Perth. Back on track and headed to Lake Cargelligo. A beautiful holiday destination for boaties. Just as we fuelled up





the skies opened up and thunder and lightning forced us under a carport for shelter. Half an hour later we thought it may be best to stay in the pub and have a nice meal for a change.

The publican assured us that he would unlock the gates at 6 am to get our bikes out, only to wait until 7 am, which put us an hour behind so we decided to do the bitumen to Hay then take the road to Maude that had been recommended by a local and turn off onto the Oxley road. This turned out to be another great ride with seal then a nice gravel road. Just as well our 650 cc bikes only do about 130 kms per hour or we would be doing a lot more which is very dangerous with the stock and wildlife roaming free.

From Balranald we decided to ride the boring 260 kms along the Stuart Highway to Mildura. It's actually nice to get off gravel and dirt once in a while and we knew that we would be back on dirt sooner or later. Mildura to Renmark via Wentworth turned out to be the best riding so far on this trip and the second time I had to fill up from the extra fuel bladder that I carry. Out of nowhere we came across this massive Lake Victoria which is a naturally occurring shallow fresh

water lake used for water storage for South Australia and has a capacity of 680 gegalitres. We were really having fun and decided to do another 116 kms of seal to Morgan. Mildura and Morgan are on the Murray River and this is a very beautiful area with good farm land, grape vines and lots of house boats.

We took the free barge across the river to a free camping site where we met another adventure rider who gave us more places to go.

On track now with a few 900 kilometre days behind us and our plan to have New Year's Eve at the Blinman pub in the Flinders Ranges was looking good. This pub is closed over the Christmas break but will open just for New Year's Eve.


Another 6 am start as we were both looking forward to a full day on gravel and dirt. On our way up to Yunta via Pine Valley for bacon and eggs. A tourist just pulled up in his car with the front all smashed in from hitting an Emu at only 50 kms an hour. After we filled our bikes and our guts we headed north up to Curnamona. This road was 270 kms of wide boring gravel and then Robin got a flat rear tyre. Last thing



we needed in the heat. We took the wheel off but we couldn't break the bead to get the tyre levers under the tyre, but I had read or heard that you could break it with a bike stand and it worked well. Put the new tube in but that had a few holes in it from rubbing under my seat for 40,000 kms so we put a 19 inch tube in until we could buy another 17 inch. We were pleased to get the wheel back on as it was stinking hot and the flies were nearly carrying us away. After 130 kms of this road we were over it by now, so we turned off towards Martins Well and Wirrealpa. This was a more challenging road and far more interesting. I stopped at the next intersection, told RC that we would get to Blinman early and just needed to go straight up this road. He took off, yep the dumb arse went the wrong way and headed towards the Ranges. By the time I caught up it wasn't worth going back so we decided to head to Wilpena Pond which turned out to be okay. My plan to go to the Blinman Pub for New Years Eve went out the window but Wilpena Pond was nice. At reception I booked a tent site for \$14 and Robin asked for a cabin but quickly changed his mind when the girl said it was \$155 for the cheapest room. This is a very popular camping spot in the Flinders Ranges National Park. Robin was not as keen on camping as I am.

New Year's morning at 6 am and we were on the road dodging the kangaroos and emus and smelling the dead ones along the side of the road. We were only doing about 50 kms an hour as wild life was constantly running out in front of us. We were heading south to Hawker then back up about 5 kms to Arkaba to find a dirt road towards Port Augusta that someone had told us about. When we got to

the railway line, that's when we started to lose our way and we went straight ahead down a farm track, over the head of a dam and headed towards sand dunes. The wild life surrounded us and it was like riding through a wild life park. After a while the track got rougher and narrower so we turned back towards the railway line. We got back on the gravel road and raced off again until we got to a gate, then another gate, then more narrow tracks and then farm tracks that went in all directions. We were totally lost but we could see the railway line in the distance but couldn't get to it. Fuel and water were low and it was very hot. We knew we couldn't make it back to Hawker so we tried to back track. When we got back to the railway line we found the track to the left that we missed. If I had my glasses on when I read the map two hours ago, we would have been at Port Augusta by now.



Always wear  
appropriate riding gear.  
Good helmet, boots,  
gloves and riding  
gear with Kevlar.

Never mind it was a good ride. Fuelled up again at Port Augusta and headed west to Iron Knob then south down a dirt road to Moonable and Murninnie Beach. Now we are getting into soft sand and narrow tracks and some tricky riding conditions, especially with the extra weight I had on my bike. We were relying on Robin's GPS which was showing that we were on a road, although it was more like a beach track than a road. Robin fell off in thick sand as a kangaroo run out in front of him. Well that's what he said anyway.

After some very hard riding we got to a steep hill with a four wheel drive track with thick soft sand and there was no way I could have got my Transalp up there without burning the clutch. We dropped the fence on the side of the track and had a go at bush bashing our way to the top. Firstly Robin tried until he hit the fence and fell off. I had a go and got bogged. Robin walked to the top to see if there was some light at the end of the tunnel and a way out. I took some weight off my bike, let the rear tyre pressure down and rode up to the top, to Robin's amazement. We raced down to get Robin's bike and he had left the key on and the battery was flat. We tried to push it down the hill but wouldn't start. I walked back up the hill and rode back down to tow Robin's bike and then we both rode up. We continued on guided by the GPS that took us through a few barley paddocks then finally out to a gravel road just on dark. We had enough, so we pitched our tent up in a farmer's paddock and had a cuppa tea. What a way to spend New Year's day.

Early start on the highway to a lovely little town called Tumbly Bay. At breakfast a local told us about

a narrow farm track that was a legal road along the beautiful coast line to Port Neil. This was an amazing track with awesome views.

Next destination was a place called Brooker which is my surname. Brooker Road was a long wide gravel road to the small place called Brooker. All that was there was a fire station and a hall. Quite fitting really as I have a reputation for lighting fires.

My front tyre was never going to make it to Perth but I was told that there is a tyre shop at Ceduna and maybe one before then so I wasn't too worried. I could get one and change it myself if I had to. We headed up the Tod Highway towards Wudinna on a sealed road until after about 30 kms I noticed Robin wasn't behind me. I waited for a while then went back to see that he had a flat rear tyre as he hadn't put more air in it after letting it down yesterday. We found an old stump to rest the bike on and took the wheel off. I took the tube out and put the only one we had left which was a 21 inch to go in the 17 inch wheel. It wouldn't blow up so I took it out again and noticed a few holes caused by the tube being folded up for 40,000 kms, so put a few patches on it and tried again. Because the tube was so big we couldn't get enough air into it but we tried to ride it anyway. Maybe I put grass in the tyre and zip ties around the tyre. I went ahead towards Lock to buy a 17 inch tube when I came across a house with a motorbike on a trailer at Tooligie. Darren Mudge was a helpful farmer who went back down and put Robin's bike on his trailer and took him to a little town called Lock where the guy had a 17 inch tube but no bike tyres on hand. The wheel got fixed but there was one little problem. We left a spacer for the wheel out





and it must have been still on the side of the road 40 kms south. I rode back down looking for the spacer in the sand, and lucky for us I found it. It was now 6.30 pm and we thought that we would risk riding carefully and get a few more miles under our belt. We made it to Wudinna camp ground for the night and looked forward to the shower and washing our clothes in the shower.

Looking forward to riding into Western Australia for the first time, first I needed to buy another front tyre from Ceduna on the way. Well that was the plan. Unfortunately, the information I had relied on was wrong and Ceduna doesn't sell bike tyres but I could get one if I waited two days. Bugger, I'm not one for hanging around so after another cuppa we decided to leave this town. Aborigines lined the streets and they were queued up outside the liquor shops waiting for them to open. There is no way my tyre would last to Kalgoorlie as it was 1387 kms away but we thought we would push on and cross that bridge when the time came which is not really a good idea. At least I had a mate riding with me on this trip. I was certain I would have purchased a tyre before now. We reached the Quarantine Station at Border Town where all vehicles are checked for produce entering Western Australia. I decided here that I couldn't risk riding across the Nullarbor with this tyre. I phoned Kalgoorlie bike shop and they could get a tyre here in two days so Robin continued on towards the Nullarbor and I thought I'd wait for a road train that had room for a bike. Sure enough, after about an hour and many other trucks later, I met Arron Davidson (Tazz) who was driving a Freightliner for Watson Express Transport. We got the fork lift from the roadhouse and loaded the bike up and off we went towards the

Nullarbor. I am from a family of truck drivers and I've always wanted to cross the Nullarbor in a truck so this couldn't have worked out better. Meanwhile, it was getting late and Robin was camping at Eucla. We hit a few roos in the truck and Tazz said that he hit 37 one night without any damage to the truck. Tazz was into motorbikes so I couldn't have got a better driver to hitch a ride with. We got to Balladonia at 10.30. I slept in the sleeper of a road train that was following us. That driver slept in the sleeper of the truck we had on the back and Tazz slept in his. How perfect was that. Next morning, and now five hours behind NZ time we continued towards Norseman then up to Kalgoorlie where Tazz unloaded my bike and I rode it to the bike shop for the much needed tyre.

Robin was still out of reception, so I had no idea how far behind me he was. We had planned to meet at Kalgoorlie. I rode to the Super Pit lookout which is one of the largest open cast gold mines in the world, housing one of the richest gold deposits. 15 million tonnes of rock is moved every year and the mine is 570 metres deep. The trucks looked like tonka toys.

After finally hearing from my mate who had reached Norseman, I decided to ride the 188 kms to meet him so we could continue riding together. It was 46 degrees so I thought I'd keep riding in shorts and a tee shirt. I was nearly spewing up in my helmet because I was so hot. My arms and legs were burning as though I was standing in front of a log fire with a fan going. I stopped at Kambalda for a cold drink and soaked my shirt in water and phoned RC to say I was going to be a while. He said to put my jeans and jacket back on and it would cool me down. Sure enough it did help and I continued on and met



Twilight Beach

RC on the way as he was worried about me. Isn't that nice. Once we both got to the road house at Norseman we thought that was a big enough day so camped at the expensive motor camp.

We were planning to do a few inland dirt roads but the locals said that the bull dust was too thick and we would not get through, so we took their advice and did the 202 kms to Esperance, although we did find a few dirt road detours to explore on the way. Wheat paddocks dominated the landscape and canola is grown here as well. We were impressed with the big grain bins everywhere. They were steel frames about one metre high filled with grain stacked up high then covered with tarpaulins.

What a beautiful place Esperance is with its beautiful beaches, cooler climate and salt flats. It was still hot but only in the 30's. It felt a lot like the Manawatu climate with a nice breeze. Esperance had a great lookout overlooking the town, beaches and out to sea and on a clear day it was spectacular. We rode around the tourist drive along the southern coast to Twilight Beach. The prettiest beach I'd ever been to. Blue clear water and not too deep and so sheltered. A local told us that it was reasonably safe apart from a white pointer shark in the bay the week before and a little girl was eaten a few months ago. That's Aussie safe.

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The Nullarbor has the longest straight road in Australia at 145.6 kms long but Saudi Arabia has a straight road that is 1116 kms long.

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We had been riding in our shorts and jandals all morning so we decided to continue the 78 kms to Munglinup as we were. From here we put our gear on as we rode along the South Coast Highway to the turn off to Jerdauttup as we had enough of main roads again, and looked forward to more nice fine gravel.





One truck will use approximately \$8 Million worth of fuel and \$3 Million worth of tyres in a year. It's True!





The wind got up and it was blowing as much as it does in Woodville New Zealand, as we approached Hopetoun on the south coast. From there we decided to go through the Fitzgerald National Park at 110-120 kms an hour as the roads were badly corrugated and it seemed better riding faster although the roos were around so it was only luck that we didn't hit one. We pitched our tents up in a little settlement motor camp called Jerrungup. Notice all the names around here end with 'up'.

Our biological body clock was still waking us up early so 4.30am we were having a cuppa in the camp kitchen trying not to wake other campers. RC put his riding gear in the kitchen overnight and I left mine hanging on the bike and it was very wet the next morning from a very heavy dew. 5.30 am and we had another 178 kms to Albany along the Coast Highway. It was bitterly cold and my fingers were freezing inside my thin mx gloves and Robin was wearing my jersey as he feels the cold more than me. Breakfast in the beautiful town of Albany consisted of pancakes, bacon and icecream. Good start for the next stage which was around the tourist route to Denmark and Walpole which included a few extra gravel road loops along the way. This region reminded me of the Warurton Yarra Glen area in Victoria with its tall straight gum trees and nice twisty roads.

Once we passed through Walpole we turned left on a gravel road to the D'Entrecasteaux National Park. The sign said 'no through road' and 'road closed' but our GPS showed it on the map and it looked like fun so we ignored the signs and headed off. Bits of bull dust made things tricky and about 45 minutes into it we came across the road closed sign. There was

a bridge blocked off with big logs but we got around the ends and continued to the end of a great National Park. We decided to turn left to Windy Harbour and South West Reef for a few more photos then back tracked again on sealed roads to Highway 10 then onto the Vasse Highway, Stewart Road and Brockman Highway aiming for Augusta for the night. Before we got to the Pemberton Turnoff Robin was riding a bit erratically which as not abnormal for him but this time he was on the wrong side of the road. I tooted, yelled and was about to throw my drink bottle at him when he noticed me riding next to him. He thought I wanted a race so he took off around the sweeping bends until we finally stopped. I asked him what the hell he was doing back there. "I fell asleep and when I woke up I thought I was on a motor way. The cops should take my licence off me". Well that wouldn't work as the cops are always taking his licence off him. It was very scary and it gave him a fright. He is known for falling asleep and I'm always watching out for him but this was getting serious. We carried on towards Karridale with my fuel very low and I anticipated running out 10 kms before Karridale. Sure enough we had to take a litre out of Robin's bike to make it to the next roadhouse.

In Augusta we found a 14 acre holiday park to pitch our tent and there was a guy making Pizzas for the evening so that was a change from Irish stew. Sunday morning and I noticed my chain was loose again, I had no more adjustment left so I would have to ride slowly to the nearest bike shop at Margaret River for a new chain tomorrow. Monday morning and only four hours from Perth, Robin decided not to wait around for the bike shop but continue on by himself to Conrad and Chelsea's. The bike shop didn't have a

chain but we managed to take two links out so I could get to Perth.

I had been told that this part of Australia was spectacular and it certainly didn't disappoint as the coast line and beaches were stunning. I got off the main road to the Coastal Cave Road up to Cape Naturaliste to see another lighthouse and have a walk around as I had lots of time. Signs warning every one of venomous snakes in the area. I wondered if I shouldn't have been in bare feet. Off to Busselton and this beach was another one packed with swimmers and sunbathers all swimming inside the netted area to keep the sharks out. I walked the famous Busselton Pier which is 1.84 kms long. The longest Pier in the southern hemisphere. Too many people here for this country boy so I headed north to Bunbury where I pitched my tent in the motor camp next to the kitchen area so I could charge my GPS, and phone. It was about 6 pm with no wind and not a cloud in the sky. The nice white sandy beaches were still packed with swimmers, sun bathers and families cooking BBQs even later in the evening.

I just received a call from Robin who should have been in Perth by 1 pm. As he got close to his daughter's house in Perth he realised that he had dropped his bum bag containing his passport, wallet and phone. He rode back to Bunbury and went to the police station just as a nice gentleman was handing his bum bag in. How lucky was that. No phone but when he got to Chelsea's he googled an app 'find my phone' and sure enough this app highlighted Robin's phone on a map so they drove back 40 kms to exactly where the map indicated and there the phone was on the side of the road. Who would have thought an app like that would work.

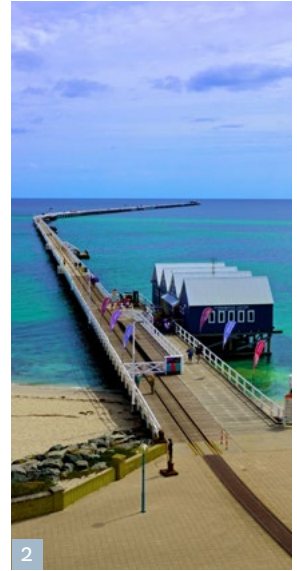


<b>NULLARBOR WEST</b>	
<b>BORDER VILLAGE</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>EUCLA</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>MUNDRABILLA</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>MADURA</b>	<b>373</b>
<b>COCKLEBIDDY</b>	<b>490</b>
<b>CAIGUNA</b>	<b>522</b>
<b>BALLADONIA</b>	<b>720</b>
<b>NORSEMAN</b>	<b>911</b>
<b>KALGOORLIE</b>	<b>1099</b>
<b>ESPERANCE</b>	<b>1103</b>
<b>ALBANY</b>	<b>1579</b>
<b>PERTH</b>	<b>1658</b>



Make sure you always use Telstra and not Optus as Telstra phone coverage is far better in the remote areas.





**1.** Now which way? **2.** Busselton Pier.  
**3.** Twilight Beach. **4.** West Coast.

Today I will reach my final destination in Perth which means this ride is drawing to a close. Firstly I had to ride up the Old Coast Road to Rockingham and out to Cape Peron and more magnificent beaches. I parked up and took off my jeans and jacket and put them in my panniers and hung my boots on the back over the blinkers as I do most nights. It was good walking around in shorts and jandals admiring the views out to sea from old military bunkers. I got back to the bike and rode to the next tourist spot in my jandals etc and walked some more. So picturesque around here with families out enjoying the beautiful parks.

My GPS got me through Perth and up to Ellenbrook and Annes Landing to Chelsea and Conrad's. Just before I got to the house I realised that I was still in my shorts and jandals, and shit, I wonder if there is an app for finding my boots. They must have fallen off the back.

Left Perth airport at 11.35 pm on the 12<sup>th</sup> and headed for Wellington Airport for a 3 pm landing the next day. Got to my Gold Wing parked with the other motorbikes. I opened up the boot and side panniers to find my motor bike gear all mouldy and still wet from 16 days ago. I normally ride around the barrier arms but the airport has extended the arms so I had to follow a car out to avoid paying as usual.

Well another amazing trip at an end and my bike will be parked up for Conrad to give it a good over haul ready for the next trip to the Kimberleys and back to Perth. Awesome having Robin with me on this trip. I couldn't have had a better riding buddy. Lots of laughs. 56750 kms done so far with lots more to do.



