



PART 11

Tasmania

APRIL 2019 | 7 DAYS

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DEAN GERBES FROM FEILDING AND I ARRIVED AT MELBOURNE AIRPORT EARLY ON THE 2ND APRIL AND MADE OUR WAY TO PICK UP A UTE AT HIS BROTHERS PLACE TO LOAD BIKES ON. DEAN DOESN'T LIKE THE SEA SO I TOOK OUR BIKES ACROSS ON THE UTE AND DEAN FLEW TO LAUNCESTON WHERE I MET HIM THE NEXT MORNING. LAUNCESTON HAS A POPULATION OF 106,153 AND IS THE SECOND LARGEST CITY IN TASMANIA. IT WAS A 10 HOUR OVERNIGHT FERRY CROSSING ON THE SPIRIT OF TASMANIA AT A COST OF \$580 INCLUDING A BUNK BED IN A SHARED 4 BERTH CABIN.



Cooked breaky at Geoff and Andrea Clarkes at Cressy, then 15 minutes to Pisa farm where we worked between 1987 to 1992. Best working years of our life. Ian and Jenny Morrison let us leave the ute there and off we went on another exciting adventure towards Smithton on the north West Coast. The 8 day forecast was 6-18 degrees so we wouldn't want to be any later riding here. We turned off to Stanley to see the large hill known as the "Nut" for a few photos then continued to Smithton and towards Woolnorth and Cape Grim but we couldn't find the track down the coast. We came across a locked gate so turned back to Smithton and headed to Marrawah then to Arthur Rivers Cabins to pitch a tent for the night. Thought there would be a shop there to buy food but we were wrong so we starved for the night.

Next morning we left our camp site at 6am in the dark. Freezing cold and going slow as there were lots of Pademelons (like little Kangaroos) on the road and Tasmanian Devils. It seemed to take forever in the dark to get to Couta Rocks turnoff as the sun slowly came up but the wind was cold, typical of the west coast. A very remote rugged place that very few visit. We missed the turnoff to Corinna and went an extra 18kms to the Sumac Lookout which turned out to be a good ride. Eventually arrived at Corinna. We could have taken the short barge crossing to Zeehan but decided to take the dirt road to the tourist attraction of Cradle Mountain, 115kms. Cradle Mountain is 1545 metres high and the sixth highest mountain in Tassie.



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Sealed roads then nice twisty white gravel roads and rugged countryside to a busy information building full of tourists and buses outside waiting to ferry people up the mountain. The \$18 bus ride was well worth the money especially on the sunny day we had. At Cradle Mountain I noticed Deans rear tyre had no tread left so we detoured 100kms up to Burnie to get a new tyre and a thicker pair of mx gloves for me. It was 152 kms south to Queenstown and we thought we'd try and get there before dark. Yep, we arrived in the dark to the smell of chimney smoke from residents fires on a chilly night. Couldn't be bothered putting up the tent so \$95 for a budget motel, and a roast at the pub made our day. Queenstown, the largest town on Tasmania's West Coast, is surrounded by dramatic hills and mountains and was once the world's richest mining town. The copper mining and mass logging in the early 1900s created a surreal and rocky 'moonscape' of bare coloured conglomerate. Population now is around 2000 and still has a large Copper mine. Off up the awesome twisty hill out of Queenstown in the dark to the lookout over Queenstown and the Iron Blow lookout and the remains of years of mining.

1. The Nut at Stanley. **2.** Sumac Lookout.

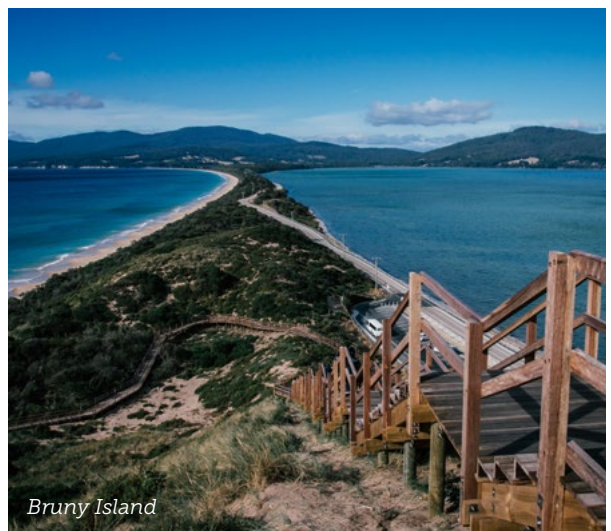
Being reasonably fit can make your riding more enjoyable and safe. Do some longer rides at home before setting off on and adventure away.



Dean reckoned that the road from Queenstown to Bronte Park was one of the best roads he had ever ridden and I agreed. Turned up towards Miena to do a 175 km lap around the Great Lake in the highlands. The lake is 176 square kms and used for hydroelectric power, fishing and tourism, and is 1030 metres above sea level. That explains why it was freezing cold and wet on our ride with very poor visibility. Once we got down we had a cold wind and sunshine so we thought a bed at a friend's house in Margate, Hobart would be nice for the night.



Another typical early morning start in the dark trying to be careful with so many Kangaroos about, until I shit myself again when a rabbit ran into my front wheel, lucky it wasn't a deer or Kangaroo. Heading south with the water edge on our left, we arrived at the Hartz mountains where a road was blocked due to large out of control forest fires. Some were still smoldering as we experienced another nice gravel road in a burnout forest and scorched trees. Nearly 200,000 hectares of fires already this summer. From there we back tracked again to Cygnet then Kettering to catch the Bruny Island ferry at a cost of \$6 each for the 20 minute crossing. Only 61 kms to the lighthouse at the bottom of the Island with a population of about 650 on this 360 square metre Island. Mainly sealed roads with the odd gravel side road made it a well worth while detour. Next stop was Port Arthur but first we had to try and navigate the city traffic. 208,000 people live in Hobart and we only have 14,000 in Feilding so these wide motorways are confusing for country boys like us.





After a few wrong turns and me going down the motorway the wrong way, we arrived at the biggest tourist attraction in Tasmania. Port Arthur is a 19th Century Penal settlement open-air museum and the place of the 1996 worst mass murder event in post-colonial Australian history where 35 people were killed and 23 injured. I'd been there many times before so I stayed in the café and drank tea while Dean had a good look around. From there we rode north to Richmond and stayed with friends again on a farm. Thank goodness for a GPS.



We are getting used to the early morning rides in the dark as we headed towards the east coast dodging wildlife again and just seeing a silhouette of the coast line next to the road. I'm sure it would be really stunning here in the daylight. Must have been only about 6 degrees as we were cold and ready for a cuppa at Swansea. Freycinet National Park on the Freycinet Peninsula was our next stop as it slowly warmed up to admire this fantastic scenery while watching out for deer, Tasmanian Devils and Kangaroos. Locals on the Australian Adventure Riders Facebook page told me about some of these detours and it was good advice. Riding up the east coast some more to Chain of Lagoons then a fantastic road over Elephant Pass to St Marys. Dean and I wanted to go back and do it again but time was against us. Headed inland to Campbell Town to show Dean some incredible carvings in old trees. These incredible works of art are all around Tasmania. Carved from three trees by Eddie Freeman from Ross these unusual sculptures depict the history of the town. Absolutely incredible craftsmanship next to a beautiful old bridge.





1. Port Arthur. **2.** Devils Corner Vineyard.
3. View to Coles Bay and Freycinet Peninsula.
4. Carvings at Campbel Town.



From here we took the inland road to “Pisa” for a cuppa with Ian and Jenny then to the cute old town of Evandale on the way to Ben Lomond. Ben Lomond is 1570 metres high and near the top is Jacobs Ladder. One of the famous hairpinned roads of the world. Mainly sealed roads apart from the odd gravel road detour we found. Temperatures were low and as we climbed further up Ben Lomond Mountain it got colder and wetter. Visibility was poor as the cloud got thicker but what we could see of the road was still good riding. Once we got to the switch back hill known as Jacobs Ladder we could only see about three feet in front of us. No sign of anyone else on the mountain, just two crazy kiwi’s freezing, wet, and cold so we decided to race back down and look for clearer sky’s. Went back to Launceston and followed

the Tamar River to Beaconsfield then Beauty Point where we found a Hotel for the night. Put a heater in the bathroom and dried our riding gear during the night. The Tamar River is a 70kms long estuary which runs into the Bass Strait. With dry riding gear we set off in the dark and over the Batman Bridge and a few more gravel roads as we headed back to Ben Lomond because we could see a short window of clear skies about 11am. Sure enough, the clouds dispersed as we climbed Ben Lomond again. Jacobs Ladder was everything and more than what we anticipated. Stunning and incredible ride with views for miles. We couldn’t stop taking photos, even riding with one hand taking photos of every opportunity for a good shot. How could two days be so different? This was certainly the highlight of our trip and well worth the second look.



My bike had a horrible rattle coming from the motor and the clutch had been slipping so I was hoping that's what it was and not piston and rings. After about 70,000 kms completed around Australia with no bike problems at all up until now, I have been so lucky. With a rattle from my bike we rode back to 'Pisa' and loaded Deans bike back on the ute. I enjoyed this State so much that I decided to leave my bike in Cressy and return in the summer for another ride.

It's hard to believe that it is all over. Certainly a trip of a lifetime with great experiences, and memories that I'll never forget. I met some wonderful people along the way and received some good help and advice.

Life is short, so get out and do the things you enjoy. You never know how many good summers you have left.

