



PART 7

Tamworth Loop

SEPTEMBER 2017 | 18 DAYS

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ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A WEEK OFF FROM SELLING REAL ESTATE TO GO FOR ANOTHER QUICK RIDE ON MY TRANSALP IN AUSSIE. THIS TIME I WILL WORK MY WAY UP TO TAMWORTH AND BACK. MY BIKE HAD BEEN GIVEN A GOOD SERVICE AT A LOCAL BIKE SHOP SO IT WAS GOOD TO GO.



As usual I had this trip well mapped out with kilometres from towns and scenic points of interest along the way. Everything changed because of typically unreliable Victoria weather with road closures at Omeo due to snow. So all my trip was diverted, hopefully towards warmer weather.

After a day's travelling to my brother's place in Moe and a good night's sleep, I embarked at 6.30 pm and headed on the M1 towards Melbourne, as the weather was crap with heavy rain and it was freezing. I turned off before Pakenham, up a dirt road heading towards Healesville. Four kms along the road I noticed a deer running right beside me, I was hoping that it was going to turn off away from me and not towards me. Fortunately for me, it did. Just before Healesville the dirt ended and I was back on the bitumen again, to Yea and Seymour via Glenburn for a change as I



normally do the Blackspur through Buxton, but this new road to me was just as picturesque. It was still wet and I was very cold with my old MX gloves on. My heated hand grips were only working on low so I stopped in Shepparton for a pair of tramping gloves as I continued up to Narrandera, where I found a cheap motel for the night. Too cold to camp for this old fart. This was the coldest I'd ever been on a bike, even with the news paper stuffed down inside my jacket.

Someone said to me once that "a bad day on the bike is still better than a good day in the office". From Narrandera I headed to Coolamon then left to Temora where there was less traffic and more of the nice flowing country roads I enjoyed. Finally the weather was improving the further north I got. Beautiful old buildings in these little townships and



I like to average 650 kms per day over most trips and with some days over 800 kms to allow time to see some sites along the way.





especially the old pubs and old churches. Once I reached the small town of Young, I turned off onto Lawson Way to Greenfell as I needed to get to Tamworth before dark. I had my Transalp opened out to 130 km per hour which is about its limit. No sign of cops on the back roads. The road to Canowiodra and on to Molong were the best roads I had ridden so far on this trip. Blue sky and lunch in Molong made me forget about how cold it was earlier today and yesterday.

After lunch I headed up the Mitchell Highway and branched off towards Wellington on another great dirt road. I by passed Wagga Wagga and Dubbo and other cities and bigger towns at every chance I got. Today was turning out to be a bigger day than I had anticipated and Tamworth was still hours away, so another fast pace for 82 kms along the Castlereagh Highway then another minor road called Black Stump Road to Gunnedah. By this time it was dark and my sun visor on my helmet was no good so out came my clear safety glasses so I could see at night. Wild life were coming out onto the roads so I slowed down to 80 kms per hour and kept a sharp lookout for any movement on the side of the road. Finally, I arrived at Noel Bowerman's bed and breakfast in Tamworth. Noel is a motorbike rider himself who can give good tips on where to ride and what to see. Noel suggested I go north to Armidale then Wollombi Falls and turn right down towards Kempsey. This was a great dirt

road with great views. I stopped suddenly as I came across a large Carpet Python Snake crossing the road. Got my camera out to get a great photo. Wasn't too keen on a close up as they are pretty quick. Soon after that I ran over two other black snakes. The weather had improved and the sun was shining and the road was dry and dusty as there hadn't been rain for a few months. Even the tight corners were like riding in bull dust, but it was a nice change from wet and slippery. Someone told me that the South West Rocks on the coast north of Kempsey was a beautiful place, and it certainly was. White sand and a beautiful beach made it a nice spot for lunch. Reluctantly, I had to start heading south towards Wauchope to find the road to Camboyne then onto another nice narrow bitumen road to Wingham where I checked into a nice country pub. The Hosts Gary and his wife enjoy having bike riders staying, and they were a very nice couple. At \$35 a night it was worth the stop.

Fuelled up again and turned right towards Mount George to Gloucester where the main street was lined with bikes, especially outside the Bikers Café. Allister Phillip was one of many adventure riders that gave me good suggestions on which roads to explore.

I headed to the Barrington Tops National Park that I had ridden through before. This is one of the best Australian rides. Once at the top I turned right.



1. Wentworth National Park. **2.** Grand Jenolan Caves House. **3.** Entrance to Jenolan Caves.

Two years earlier I went straight ahead through the Deer gate. Both these roads meet at Moonan Flats at the bottom of the Park. Moonan Flats Pub was another great spot for lunch and more adventure riders gather here as well. Scone was my next destination, then down the New England Highway to Singleton where I camped in the local show grounds for \$10. The noise from the coal trains getting loaded during the night kept me awake, and it was so cold that there was ice between my tent fly and tent when I packed up at 6 am.

Looking forward to today's ride down the famous Putty Road where it's a popular ride for riders around the Sydney area. The Grey Gum Tree Café at the top of the hill is the meeting place for many bikers. This particular day was no exception. I found that the best part of the Putty Road is the north end.

After lunch I headed south looking for the left turn to St Albans via more dirt roads, to get away from all those Harleys heading to and from Putty. Once I passed through Wilberforce I found myself amongst more traffic as Sydney was only about 60 kms away. Heavy traffic makes me uneasy so I headed towards Blackheath and Katoomba and the famous Blue Mountains where I took the 30 minute walk to the Wentworth Falls. The total height of the falls is 187 metres (614 ft). It is well worth the ride.

While there I was told to take the windy narrow bitumen road to the Jenolan Caves. Wow what a ride and then you get to the gorge at the bottom and then unexpectedly you ride through this magnificent cave and then this resort like building. Everyone needs to visit this place. From here I continued riding out of



1. Road to Jenolan Caves. **2.** Great lookout. **3.** An old bridge on Barrys Way.

the gorge to the next town called Oberon where I stayed in the local pub as it had got cold again. This pub was dearer at \$50 per night and if you want a shower I'd advise you to turn the hot tap on before tea and hopefully the hot water would get there by the time tea was finished. After phoning my wife in New Zealand she told me that I was a day behind. I loose track of days when traveling. Therefore I had 816 kms to do tomorrow to get to my final destination.

6.15 am and I was loaded up ready to ride. It was freezing cold and a heavy frost. Away I went at about 80 kms per hour because there was black ice on the road and a sign up warning of snow and ice ahead. Normally I would not ride in these conditions but I had a deadline. It warmed up slightly but the wind chill factor made for very low temperatures. So many dead Wombats on the road and so few vehicles you wonder how many does one vehicle hit in one night. When I arrived in Gouldburn I had slightly thawed out so I fuelled up and kept heading south to Queanbeyan via the M23 then continued on to the Munro Highway to Cooma, trying to make up for lost time. A quick photo of the Cooma sign and more fuel then off to Jindabyne which is like a small version of Wanaka in New Zealand's South Island. It is 918 metres above sea level and close to the Snowy Mountains, ski resorts and Lake Jindabyne. On the back streets I found a Wifi café to check my emails and have some lunch. A mate in New Zealand said that Barrys Way between Jindabyne and Bairnsdale was an exciting road and sure enough it was awesome. It started off as bitumem and then to a dirt road with a long downhill that seemed to go forever to the rocky river at the

bottom. There was horse shit all along the narrow road but I couldn't see any wild Brumbies.

Not one other vehicle for the next two hours which was a bit of a worry if something went wrong. Especially when I came across a few fires burning out of control. Around a corner was the Victoria Border sign and from here on the rugged bush turned into a little more farm land with cattle grazing along the roadside. It wasn't long after that I found myself back on sealed roads and this time I had the feeling that this trip was drawing to a close. It got cold again and I still had over two hours riding to do. What a surprise when I was speeding around a left hand corner and there was a koala sitting in the middle of the road. I quickly stopped to get my camera out before it took off. It just sat there for me to take a photo. I was so excited. Enough excitement for this trip so off to Bairnsdale for my last fuel stop then try to get to Moe before dark.

Another trip done and dusted. It was pretty uneventful, but still a nice ride.

