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RIDE REPORT:

Sydney to Brisbane & Return

www.bikeroundoz.com



by Paul Kopp
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DAY ONE

Today was a pretty low key day, just hung out by the Sydney harbour in the morning and went to the hotel gym this afternoon to get my sweat-on or at least try to recover from last night's festivities. We also went out one last time before picking up the bikes.

So I was a little nervous driving on the left since I couldn't even remember to stay left on the side walk, constantly interrupting the flow of people and receiving perplexing looks like I'm in the wrong, only after 2 days did I realise I was! On the ride over to the bike depot my nervousness turned in to full blown stress, those who know me well know I don't stress too often, so this was serious. We get to the depot and are talking to the staff who explain the locals position on driving on the wrong side (they're not too keen on it) as well as the problem with bailing out, our right side American bailout is the left side bailout for Australians, surely we are going to end up testing the Australian health care system! Anyway, we finish up the paperwork, sign our liability or is that life away and after setting up the GPS for the hotel, off we go.

Well I've got to be honest and tell you it was a non-event, now it helps that there is traffic to follow and cars parked on the side of the road pointed in the right direction, but overall, I was stressed for nothing. I suppose though that thinking it's nothing and not be focused can cause problems.

Back at the hotel, we hook up with Robert and Tom to grab a last night dinner (for them) at



'The Meat & Wine Company' down on Darling Harbour, again another fantastic meal, wine, beer and Maker's Mark flowing freely while we attempt to solve all the world's problems. I think we made a valiant effort, most remained unsolved, there is still a dependence on despot for energy and food for that matter, over population, etc., but what we did solve, while remaining unspoken for now, will have a tremendous effect on mankind.

Look Out!



DAY TWO

Officially started the first day of my motorcycle trip, picked up the bikes from the staff at the depot, great equipment, very helpful staff and they only made fun of Rick and I for asking to connect a power outlet for our heated clothes. They also warned us about driving on the wrong side of the road, we assured her there were no worries.



A little background for you, Rick and I ride and

are used to riding a lot, a Sunday morning ride can easily be 200 miles and be done before lunch, so when we first got the itinerary from Mark at BikeRoundOz, we thought we might be bored. Usually the only sightseeing we do is while riding but Mark explained that the riding here is a little different than in the states. First of all, if it says the speed limit is 60K, they mean that, cameras are everywhere.

We also found out that they are serious about drinking and driving, we came up to a road block and everyone was doing a breathalyser test, we took off our helmets and talked to the cop, mind you, this is 4PM on a Monday afternoon, talk about a laid back country, they don't do this because they never catch any one!



Anyway after bailing out Rick, we continued on our way.

We went to Echo Point and saw the Three Sisters rock formation as well as taking on the Giant Stairway, we thought how difficult could it be, real difficult it turns out, while I got some pictures, this really doesn't do it justice, once again another

beautiful day.



So we rolled in to Windsor around dark, found our hotel and unpacked. After cleaning up we decided to see what we could get into. We walked a few blocks over to the local pub and grabbed a beer, pretty dead place with 2 locals, the bartender and us. We enjoyed the beer but it looked to be an early night. Well after the 1st beer going down so easily, we decided to partake in another, once that started a crew started hauling in the gear, an upright bass, guitars, ukuleles, speakers etc. looks like even a boring Monday night in sleepy Windsor, had potential.

Turns out this was open mic night and everybody in town (I think) can sing, we were treated to a concert and camaraderie the whole evening. Some were great while others were OK, but all had the balls to get up there.

DAY THREE

Hey guys- Rick here. You may be asking yourself why it is that I am posting for Paul. Well, I felt it

necessary to try and explain what may be one of the dumbest things I have ever done. While riding on the famous Putty Road today, I thought it would be really cool to get a little video of us ripping through a few corners. We scouted a perfect spot and Paul set up the mini tripod and camera and I rode down the mountain to get my run started. I was so excited about getting a good video that I forgot the most important rule in riding- STAY ON YOUR OWN SIDE OF THE ROAD!!! For whatever reason, I totally cheesed it and reverted back to riding on the right side of the road. All I can say is that it is not my time to go. If it was, I'd be writing this from my grave. I learned my lesson and can say without a shadow of a doubt that I will not repeat this again. Without further adieu.....



Other than the near miss, it was a pretty laid-back day as we rolled into Hunter Valley and Australia's wine country. I started to drink immediately to take the edge off of the day.

Just glad to be here for the rest of the story!

DAY FOUR

Great ride today, lunch in Gloucester and a fantastic hotel in Armidale. We're in the New England area and it's fall, leaves are changing and it was a cool, clear day. The landscape over this route remind me of the Shenandoah Valley area. Strange to think Australia is about the same size as the continental US, it had a gold rush, lots of natural resources, etc. could have easily evolved the way we did.



Anyway, this region is the only part of Australia to have four distinct seasons. Armidale, where we are staying tonight, has a town population of 22k, 17k of which are students, you know what that means, another night on the town, something to make us feel older and so uncool, but still something to do. I'll keep it short today, but if something goes on tonight, I'll check back in.

DAY FIVE

Well it just wouldn't be a complete trip without breaking out the rain gear at least once and today was that day. It was a short day in terms of mileage

but there was so much to see that we didn't get to our hotel until almost dark. I really don't have much to share that the pictures won't tell, so enjoy these and rest assured that neither Rick nor I had any problems with leeches in our eyes!! ;)



DAY SIX

The weather was calling for showers all day but thankfully, the sun held out. Today's route didn't have any sightseeing stops unlike yesterdays 'Waterfall Way' but it was one of the better rides. Not much traffic and nice curvy roads, very similar to SR-180 in North Georgia, in goat path kind of way, what was different was the tractor trailers that



use this road, not many, but when they showed up, I was on my toes!! It was really a day devoted to riding, no pictures even.



We finished the day in Lismore around 3:30, add 45min to clean up and we were in the town by 4:30. Turns out this was graduation weekend for Southern Cross University and another night of celebration at the local pub was alright by me. So we're mingling with the locals over pints of Tooheys Extra Dry when Rick and I comment that the students are closer to our age than the coeds I was picturing. We start talking to a group of graduates and discuss this, it seems as though most Australians graduate high school and travel or otherwise enjoy their youth before getting on with being an adult, maybe there is some wisdom in that thought process.

The other unique thing with regards to secondary education is that it is paid for by the government, the only way it gets paid back is if you earn a certain amount when you start working. I would assume that works pretty well if you were a doctor or engineer but what about an artist or teacher?

DAY SEVEN

Back to the beautiful Australian weather, we're headed to Brisbane today; this is as far north as we'll ride and marks our transition to coastal riding.



We stopped at a couple of parks / lookouts on the way, but the highlight was the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary. I got to hold a koala (even softer than they look) as well as feed/pet kangaroos, emus and such, plenty of pictures. I know I'm limited on detail here, but I can't put into words how cool this really was. I thought this was just going to be a tourist trap but it was a great experience and we closed the park down and would have stayed longer if we could.



We went out last night and Brisbane didn't disappoint, the Southbank was packed.



DAY EIGHT

Woke up this morning in Brisbane to a bright blue sky and a short ride ahead. Decided to go to the gym to get a good workout in before heading out. We started out towards Byron Bay, the eastern most point of Australia and were on the interstate, then we pulled off and went through the beach drives, lots of tourist traffic and we ended up stopping for a bite in Surfers Paradise and do a little people watching. Not all that different from Panama City

or Myrtle Beach.

The more I travel the smaller the world seems to become.

Highlight of the day though was the demise of my GPS unit that has done such a great job finding our destinations. We're going down the interstate at about 120 kph (70 mph) fast by Australian standards, but very slow for 285, Rick is leading and hits a bump in the road and all of a sudden I've got a missile inbound, the unit hits the road surface and bounces twice before falling into pieces on the side of the road.

We stopped (safely) about 1/2 mile further. After a discussion of are we going back and if we can even find it, would it work? We decided it was a futile effort and moved on. Well it took quite a bit of effort to locate the Lord Byron, not only because we lost the GPS, but because Mardi Gras 2012 was going on and the city was packed with both people and cars. After driving around Byron Bay in every direction but the correct one we get some local advice and she told us it was down from Woolies, well after figuring out what a Woolies was, she was right and we found it with no problem.

We checked in and went out to see the town. Byron Bay has a cool, laid back feel and with lots of big money intertwined with back packers. We had a pretty relaxed evening with just some pizza and beer while talking to two French backpackers. These guys have been here for 6 months balancing seeing the country with working on farms to earn enough to stay a little longer.

The really unique thing about them was their entrepreneurial streak; both are finishing up a dual Accounting / Pharmacy degree and want to develop a biotech company to develop the next big drug. Rick and I talked about some of the advantages in the US and business in general, never too far removed from work, I suppose. Being Sunday night and surfing coming up tomorrow, we decided to call it an early night.

DAY NINE

Well we woke up early this morning and were set up with a surfing lesson at 9:45, pretty pumped with this and ready to go. The company the hotel contracts with to provide these cancelled them because of the surf and rips, well since we were only going to be here for today we sought out a surf instructor with less concern for his liability insurance.



Probably not the best idea in hindsight but still lots of fun. I was never able to get beyond my one knee up and was being knocked around like I was in a washing machine. The instructor kept telling

Rick and I that as soon as our time was up, he was coming back because the waves were “calling him”, that should have been another clear warning, but we ignored that as well.

After coming back and rinsing off the sand, we went back into town to see what was going on, busy again, we just went to grab some lunch and some Hahn SuperDry. Very chilled day, we’re getting ready to go out for the evening and tonight, look out Byron Bay backpackers, US is in the house!!

DAY TEN

We left Byron Bay before 8 this morning for our first non-GPS day, a 400K ride down the Pacific Hwy to Port Macquarie. It was a very uneventful ride with great weather and little traffic. We got into town around 3 and decided to skip the workout to instead explore the town. Port Macquarie had the IronMan Australia triathlon this past weekend, so banners, stages and such were in various states of removal, otherwise it was a very sleepy town, a good way to unwind from a fun week.

DAY ELEVEN

Got up around 5am this morning, I wanted to catch at least one sunrise while having the Pacific on my east coast!! It was definitely worth rising for, I’ve got a full video of it, which covers about 2 minutes, but my internet connection won’t support uploading that big of a file currently, I’ll update when I get back to Atlanta. Here are some pictures from last

night and this morning

So we got back to drop off the bikes today around 1PM, really easy drive without GPS until about 30km outside of Sydney, once there the GPS would have been real handy, took us over an hour to travel that 30km and find the place. All in all, not bad and overall a fantastic bike trip, all the crew in Sydney and Mark at BikeRoundOz were outstanding to deal with and very gracious.

I’m meeting a new friend tonight for dinner and will be heading to Hong Kong in the morning. Looking forward to the flight as I’m on a Qantas A380, I am quite an aviation buff and have wanted to fly on one of these planes since I first saw the design sketches. I was fortunate enough to have frequent flyer miles that allow me to sit in first class,

I’m not sure I’m refined enough to be there, but I’ll make due.

Paul Kopp