ESCAPE TO...
THE COORONG, SYDNEY, HUNTER VALLEY, CALAIS

DOUG VOSS
THE LONG WAY... TO EARLS COURT

WORKSHOP KEEPING YOUR CHAIN IN GOOD CONDITION

DARYL BEATTIE ADVENTURES
CROSSING THE SIMPSON WITH DAZ

YAMAHA SR400
THE RETRO SINGLE RETURNS

BMW R nineT □ HONDA VFR800F □ YAMAHA XVS1300CU
it doesn't rain out here. And when it does, you're never here to see it. Everything is scorched and roasted red, like the sky is a gigantic grill turned up to max and left on for a millennia. The sand is deep, treacherous, energy sapping and never-ending. It's easy to see how men far braver than I have come to meet their maker in this desolate, lonely expanse. Burke and Wills, plus their traveling partners Grey and King, walked this place over 150 years ago. They made it from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria, but only one man, Grey, would come back to Melbourne alive. They must have been brave like warriors, and slightly mad.

You really get an idea of how insignificant you are in a place like the Simpson Desert. It's a mystical, magical place, enormous beyond explanation. Water is so scarce. Incredibly, life is sustained here, from spiders to snakes and, as I was later to find out, dingoes (see top five moments)…

But tonight, water is not scarce. Tonight is the final night for the return leg of the first ever Daryl Beattie Adventures Simpson Desert tour, and we've scored front row seats to a lightshow to rival New Years Eve on Sydney Harbour. Lightning and thunder crack in the distance and blaze the desert sky purple and silver like an Aussie version of the Northern Lights, and 10 grown men sit and stare like schoolboys, mesmerised by nature. It's a perfect curtailing to what has been one of the best weeks' motorcycling any of us, including Daryl himself, could have imagined.

Daryl Beattie has launched his own adventure tour company, travelling to some of the most remote and beautiful places in Australia. FW was lucky enough to be invited for the return leg of the very first tour.

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Story Rennie Scaysbrook
Photography R. & Daryl Beattie

Now, this is an adventure!

Alice Springs to Birdsville

Daryl Beattie has launched his own adventure tour company, travelling to some of the most remote and beautiful places in Australia. FW was lucky enough to be invited for the return leg of the very first tour.
most successful grand prix exponents. It’s like a
bikes built for speed – Honda CRF450Xs – some-
rive to get coffee. This is
meaning to the term “Adventure”. This is not a
lunch and get ready for the QAA line into Birdsville.

days like these I remember why I really love dirt-
the meeting point for South Australia, Queensland
list moment. Even Daryl admits, “You probably get
Smith in the Australasian Safari. This is a bucket
the throttle of the Honda CRF450X like Jacob
from seeing nature at her most dramatic – means
having such a monumental drenching – aside
This article first appeared in Free Wheeling magazine Issue 8, 2014. © nextmedia Pty Ltd
About 40km into the ride we reach Poppell’s
FREE WHEELING

Below lunch in the middle of nowhere:
Right: You can't handle the flie.
10 MINUTES WITH DAZ

Former 500cc Grand Prix winner Daryl Beattie has always been a country boy at heart, and we sat down with him to get his views on this new business venture.

How did you get the idea for bike adventures?

It all came from a few different things. I’ve been going away with mates for years to the NT and Cape York, and a mate of mine, Bradley Thomas, has always had some pretty cool camps. So as time went on, the Unimog came up for sale at the Army auctions. I bought it for racing this year and realised it would be perfect for bike tours. So I started setting the business up. Honda and Michelin were keen to be involved, so that’s been a huge help. The camps are great, but they need a bit of love.

It was extremely important for me to have the capacity for riders to have a good shower every night. I make such a difference in your state of mind at the end of the ride. Also, the beds were equally important. If you spend those beds before an average night was great. And having good food was imperative. A great local makes you feel good and ready to get out there and ride.

The riding takes care of itself in areas like this. So having a choice of really good food and great fuel is key to setting up the company.

How do you decide on the routes?

I read a lot of 4WD magazines and the Camping Show Recap, Cape York Simpson Desert and the Outbacker were the places everyone talks about. The Cape comes from my love of fishing. I know that area really well because I’ve been going there for 18 years.

The 4x4s and the bike need to focus on right now. We’d like to see some big bike adventure stuff on, but first from the focus is deserts and 4x4s.

Explain to us the Cape York connection

I grew up in the NT. My dad has been racing Scooter for years and there are so many stories of the Channel Country and the Channel Country is out of Brodella. Driving out to the Simpson from Brodella, I feel comfortable, like I’m at home. I love the area and the desert. So the Canning trip, we’d cross the Gibson Desert, and see some stuff further south I haven’t seen before.

How has the reaction to the company launch been?

The website and social media have been great, as well as newspapers. The two newspapers go extra because they care in the local paper. We need to do more just to get the name out there. But things like the Unimog tracker on the web site has been great. Friends and family can log onto the website and see exactly where we are on the trip, which also helps for safety.

Well and Michelin have been with us from the beginning, and the army auctions and has done a few mods to it (see breakout). Scooter has the thing dialled up – he raced classics and almost has the big girl drifting in some sections. It’s 10-ton fully loaded and ploughs through practically anything. Seeing it blister up and drive big dunes is something else.

How will you create buzz and interest? Do the army auctions and has done a few mods to it (see breakout). Scooter has the thing dialled up – he raced classics and almost has the big girl drifting in some sections. It’s 10-ton fully loaded and ploughs through practically anything. Seeing it blister up and drive big dunes is something else.

How long do you see yourself doing the tours?

I hope to be doing it for at least 10 years. When I look back at my life, whether it’s racing, commentating, they seem to work together but there’s still work to do.

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How do you do your personal training for the big girl?

It’s good to have a good core. I’ve been doing some extended runs on my bike and I’m going to get into some flat track and motocross to keep the body in shape.

Day two, our first encounter with the notorious French Line, and it will still have to wait as we hit up an oasis in the middle of nowehere – Dalhousie Springs. Dalhousie Springs is like a natural, upside down shower of around 80 holes called round springs. The water itself comes from Queensland and the Northern Territory and is heated by the earth’s core, traveling under layers of hard rock until it springs to the surface through rock faults. The result is a massive pool of mineralised water with fish and frog species found nowhere else, the water reaching 36-38ºC in the swimming area. West of the main pool the water can reach 48ºC, with a flow rate of 160L per second. Have you ever heard that expression of swimming in the world’s biggest bath? This is the world’s biggest bath. I don’t want to get out.

Back in gear after we pass old colonial housing wrecks and windmills and the ground gets progressively sandier, we see the first dune. It’s time to turn Frenchy! The French Line is the shortest and most direct route across the Simpson, but it’s also the toughest and can be one of two things. Paradise on a dirtbike or hell if you don’t know how to ride one. Luckily the CRF450Xs are built for this kind of riding, and the harder it gets the more the bikes love it. It’s conversely the opposite for my arms, which are now pumped and ready to get out there to the flag.

One campsite for the night is Georges Corner, a massive crater in the middle of nowhere, like somebody dropped a bomb on the place a thousand years ago. It seems to be a happy place to die, as at the end of the crater I see a few dingo skeletons turning to dust.

By now we’ve seen some of what the Unimog can do. This thing is a beast! That picked it up at the army auctions and has done a few mods to it (see breakout). Scooter has the thing dialled up – he raced classics and almost has the big girl drifting in some sections. It’s 10-ton fully loaded and ploughs through practically anything. Seeing it blister up and drive big dunes is something else.

How were you able to set up the tours?

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Day three sees us taking in the Big Rig Road to Lone Gum. The Big Rig Road is the longest and most direct route across the Simpson and was once used for heavy machinery but its old clay surface is now eroded, and you’ll have to take a big rig down it now – Scooter doesn’t seem to mind.

Today we get the kind of heat we’d been expecting all trip. Up until this point we’d absolutely jagged the weather – the hottest it has been was mid 20s, now it’s well into the 30s. Scooter measures the ground temp at 46ºC and calls us all pussies – the crew before us, running from Birdsville to Alice Springs, had temps like this or worse every day with a ground temp well into the 60s. Water is getting downed like it’s never going to run out.

This article first appeared in Free Wheeling magazine Issue 8, 2014. © nextmedia Pty Ltd
Ron and I both carry basic medical kit while riding for Ambulance when we did our medical training there. and two substantial medical kits – both built by QLD we run iPads with Hema maps; sat-phones; EPIRBs tracker so people can see where we are at all times; one as a back up.

That means that extra 500L can be pumped from rivers or other clean water sources. The showers can be heated if the engine is on and we run six batteries

We carry 500L of unleaded petrol, which is the legal amount, the carry parcels 40L of diesel, about 1000L, in total, which gives us on a range of about 1000km. We’ll change this water around later on an area of drinking water and 500L of shovels/hoe/hose vehicle. Your more that 300L with 500L can be pumped from rivers or other clean water sources. The showers can be heated if the engine is on and we run six batteries – has to start this truck and fire auxiliary heater, so there’s no need to run a generator – but we have one on back up.

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We also have a 3500L distributor for real emergencies. Ron and I both carry basic medical kit while riding for Ambulance when we did our medical training there. and two substantial medical kits – both built by QLD we run iPads with Hema maps; sat-phones; EPIRBs tracker so people can see where we are at all times; one as a back up.

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The trip was made all the more memorable thanks to the Honda CRF450X machines that we had the use of. The Honda 450s −− offered to the entire crew,elanding the deep sand and hard-packed trails with ease. The Michelin Desert Rear also started well −− not one tire suffered a puncture (one tire on these tires and you probably would have been able to get another 1000km or so more riding out of the tires before you needed to replace them. The Hondas were excellent using 5L. Solar tanks, which gave us enough fuel to get through most days on a single tank. They handled brilliantly as a full tank, a little tip heavy but once you’re used to them you’d never notice – especially if you’re used to riding big adventure bikes. Other mods included isolator guards, rear chains from FK Chains, steel sprockets (gear ratio was changed to go one tooth on the front and three down on the rear) 0.89 wrapped and chain covers/bolt on a bash plate and standard handlebar guards were fitted. Daryl and Ron’s bikes also ran a ringer guard for keeping the filters charged on the go.

The 450 engines was perfect for this type of terrain, with its excellent spread of power despite the taller gearing. The modifications carried out, along with the performance of the 450 engines, make this the perfect bike for this type of terrain.

This is the day also the day I make my freestyle motocross debut. Following Daryl up a steep dune, I totally forget how to ride and bury the nose of the CRF into the dune. “Hey mate, have you ever ridden before?” smartars Daryl says. The bike’s bars past the axles as I jump it out of the sand. “Right, bigger this,” I mutter, and head back about 200 metres more than I need to. First, second, third gear. At the base of the dune I scare up and seat bounce the bike. Now, not being Chad Romm means I have no skill in this area of motocrossing, and the bike immediately bungits itself 100 in the air, kicks my feet out and pitches the nose down. The result is fairly predictable (check Top 5 breakdown). And it happens right in front of the entire group. Pissed off for about five seconds, I can’t help but burst out laughing. May as well, everyone else is. Big John also comes a cropper, getting flung over the bars of the Riverbed monster late in the ride and landing on his shoulder for the second time. We arrive at the Long Gorge late in the afternoon, set up camp and get stuck into some beers. Lemo Gorge is interesting in that the manmush finx枢纽 TREE time really shouldn't be here. These trees are normally found in clay-laced soils near waterways, so how this thing has survived the desert.

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Ron: Adrian
Age: 49
From: Gold Coast, QLD
“Full on about the trip, through Twitter, and my mate Tony and I thought it would be the perfect trip for us. The trip was a one time offer CRF450X for a big consideration in our coming along. The dunes have been my favorite part of the trip. Its a real adventure, not a tour. You’re on the bikes and riding hard and the camps have been excellent.”

Ron: Gary
Age: 47
From: North QLD
“John told me about the tour which sounded pretty great, rode my own bike but if I did it again I’d definitely take one of Daryl’s bikes, because they’re the right bikes for the trip. I had a great time – the people we been fantastic. The tent was excellent – it’s the only way to camp in the desert. And the food was brilliant. It’s been a great trip.”

Ron: Dave
Age: 36
From: Adelaide, SA
“This was just a straight blast in the desert. It’s been as much fun. Riding the Finke backtrack behind Daryl was pretty amazing, but more than that, every day had something to offer – sometimes we were lost that others, but more challenging, especially the French Line. It’s a must do if you love desert riding.”

Ron: Terry
Age: 53
From: Gold Coast, QLD
“Just had too much on the trip, and we’d been talking about something like this for a number of years. It was absolutely fantastic; fantastic organisation, challenging, great camaraderie, and the food was a highlight of the trip. I’d certainly recommend this anyone thinking about it. My riding improved dramatically by the end of the trip – I would have loved to have kept riding!”

Ron: Mike
Age: 28
From: Sydney, NSW
“If you ever thought of doing this sort of ride and Daryl’s trip convinced exactly what I wanted to do and it’s my idea, the Riverbed Warrior has already paid out and despite a few ups and downs it had a great time. There’s not one part that’s our favorites. The ride been great so here the camps, I just need to be in Daryl’s more bike! 100 trips I’ll be back.”

Ron: John
Age: 52
From: North QLD
“I’d always wanted to do this sort of ride and Daryl’s trip convinced exactly what I wanted to do and it’s my idea, the Riverbed Warrior has already paid out and despite a few ups and downs it had a great time. There’s not one part that’s our favorites. The ride been great so here the camps, I just need to be in Daryl’s more bike! 100 trips I’ll be back.”

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here in the seared landscape of the Simpson Desert remains a bit of a mystery. It was fenced off in 1966 to stop cars and trucks eroding its root system, and makes for a great area to set up camp and take some photos.

Day four and after the best night’s sleep under the stars I can remember, we hit up the WAA line and Erabena Track. The WAA line is like the French Line’s little brother, not quite as powerful but still packing a decent punch. After the ease of yesterday we’re back into it – deep sand, hundreds of dunes and saltpan crossings. If you’ve only ever seen a saltpan in pictures, they don’t do them justice. They’re massive expanses of nothing, flat like a pancake (in comparison to the dunes), with heat hazes coming off them that make it look like they’re underwater. It’s just your mind playing tricks on you, and the Simpson saltpans are not pearly white like the ones at Bonneville. They’re a grey, browny mixture that’s slippery as all hell if it’s got even the slightest amount of water in its surface. Keep it pinned and avoid quick direction changes, as you’ll likely slip out if you’re not careful.

The WAA line eventually turns at the Erabena Track and provides more of the same as far as dune riding goes – they’re gray, browny mounds that’s slippery as all hell if it’s got even the slightest amount of water in its surface. Keep it pinned and avoid quick direction changes, as you’ll likely slip out if you’re not careful.

GET ONONE!

Keen to try this for yourself? Here’s a list of the upcoming tours Daryl is doing. For more information, go to www.darylbeattieadventures.com.au.

Cairns to Bamaga – Cape York
Tour 1: 3-8 September
Tour 2: 1-6 October
Desert to WA Coast – Uluru to Broome
15 July–1 August

TOP FIVE MOMENTS
1. That final day across the Simpson to Birdsville: A little bit of rain goes a long way and made the final 250km the world’s biggest motocross track. Seeing 10 grown men laughing like kids after a wild ride is a pretty cool feeling.

2. My attempts at retaining my dignity: The impromptu seat bounce (left) off the CRF over one stubborn dune and the resulting prang was the highlight for many, and super embarrassing for me. Oh well, you gotta be able to laugh at yourself!

3. The food: Daryl’s brother-in-law Grant (left) is an absolute weapon in the bush kitchen. Butter chicken, ravioli, BBQs, Madagascan lamb, beef bourguignon – you’d find it hard to out-eat at a top restaurant. Top that off with healthy fresh wraps for lunch and you’ve got a bunch of very happy riders.

4. The beds and showers: The bedding was top notch. We used Jet Bunkers and properly insulated sleeping bags that kept us warm all night. Sleeping in comfort with just the flynet separating you and the stars is pretty special.

5. The night of the dingo: This only happened to me. I had a dingo sniffing around my bed in the howling wind of the final night and decided to give one a bit of研究 with his nose on my head, which scared the shit out of me. A quick “BAH!” from me, while waking up the camp at 2am, seemed to scare him off. Mongrel.

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