

The company that I work for does a fair bit of work in Perth. Having my Honda VTR1000 Firestorm over there was good because it allowed me an escape outlet on weekends. All that has come to a grinding halt due to a decline in construction in the housing market. I was instructed to finish one last job and then clear out all of my stuff. Time to ride back to Melbourne.

Day 1: Good Friday is a terrible time to find accommodation in the south west corner of WA because everyone in Perth seems to head south for Easter. To find somewhere to stay near the coast requires many months booking in advance, a luxury I did not have. I managed to find and book a bed at the Nannup Hotel, a bit inland from the heavy coastal traffic, so I knew that I would be alright for the first night's accommodation.

I headed off in the morning with the intention of riding the Caves Road all the way to Augusta in the most south west corner of the country and doing the Leeuwin Light House tour.

The first part of the trip was boring freeway from Perth to Bunbury but I wanted to get past all the traffic as fast as I could and get to the good roads past Bunbury. All the road houses had more cars than spaces and I wasn't going to stop and fight for a drink amongst the crowds so I just kept going until the turn off for the Tuit Forest before Busselton. These are the first tall trees since leaving Perth and the road has some good curves. Notice I didn't say corners because they almost don't exist in WA. So when you find a road with good curves, enjoy it. First stop Busselton for fuel and then down to the waterfront for a coffee.

After leaving Busselton it's on to Dunsborough and the mighty Caves Road. This is the second best road I have found in WA and it has lots of curves, almost a few corners, and goes on for about 80 km. It is a must do if you are over that way.

I kept going past the turn off to Margaret River, which is overpriced and overrated in my opinion, and kept heading for Augusta and Cape Leeuwin. Tour over, I headed up the Brockman Highway to Nannup, a typical south west road, mostly straight with a few curves, and lined by trees.

Nannup, on Good Friday, could easily be the scene of a movie, *The Most Boring Place on Earth*, because everything is closed except for a couple of cafes. I couldn't even get a beer at the pub I was staying in. But luckily, the only place open for dinner was licensed, so I was saved. Day 1: 450km

Day 2 starts off on the road from Nannup to Bridgetown, the best motorcycle road in WA. It has fantastic corners and bends, except it runs out too soon.

I rode from Perth to Melbourne last year, at the same time of the year, and rode the coast road all the way to Esperance. So this year I wanted to do something different. At Bridgetown I headed to Manjimup and then took the Muirs Highway to Mount Barker and then Chester's Pass Road through the Stirling Ranges. All these roads are fairly straight and even a road with the name "Pass" in it isn't very windy. So I just kept going towards Lake Grace.

I planned to get fuel at Borden but when I got there the fuel station has been closed for some time. Bugger. Not enough fuel to make the next town. I had passed a roadhouse earlier so I headed back to it. It turned out to be 20km back and I just made it. Why not carry spare fuel? I hear you ask. Well, my brand new five litre jerry can is somewhere between Mount Barker and the Stirling Ranges. Luckily, I hadn't filled it.

So it's off to Lake Grace, a salt lake in the wheat belt area of WA. Lake Grace has seen better days and the only decent hotel was booked out, so I decided to keep riding to Hyden, the town next to Wave Rock, the reason I headed this way. The road winds through the salt lakes and clay pans and is less straight than I imagined. Got to Hyden and booked into the motel at the back of the pub. Day 2: 642km

Day 3: The plan was to see Wave Rock and then head on to Kalgoorlie.

Wave Rock is quite interesting but I wouldn't make a special trip just to see it. At 18km down the road is cave covered in aboriginal paintings which I decided to have a look at. The last 800m is a reasonable dirt road but it does have corrugations to keep you on your toes.

The artwork was a bit disappointing; it is just hand stencils and doesn't even look that old. After a look I headed back into Hyden to fuel up before heading to Kalgoorlie.

I went into the servo to pay for my fuel and when I walked back out I noticed one of my bags was missing. I wasn't sure if it was there when I got to the servo or not, so I went back to the dirt road to look for it, riding up and down the road slowly. No joy. So I went to all the tourist places to ask if it had been handed in. No one had handed in a bag. I went back to the dirt road and looked again but still no luck. It is an outback road and there are not many hiding places, so either it fell off and was picked up, or someone stole it off the bike while I was in the servo. Either way, the bag was gone and with it my camera, reading glasses, wet weather gear, trip notes, 2010 Phillip Island hat and sunscreen.

I also lost my distance glasses in the panic to find my bag. I usually clip them to the bike when I get off because once I rode off and they fell and got squashed. This makes me think that the bag and glasses were lifted off the bike because the glasses were an expensive brand with transition lenses which would have looked like sun glasses to a passer-by.

I have now wasted two to three hours and my motel booking in Kalgoorlie is not refundable, so I had to get moving.

The road goes to Kondinin and then up to Merredin on the Great Eastern Highway. The local police station is at Kondinin so I called in to leave my details in case anyone handed in the bag. The police station was in the main street and officers were standing there with their radar gun amassing numerous bookings, handing out double demerit points because it was a long weekend.

The only cars in town were travellers and because it is in the middle of nowhere and being a 50km/h zone the police were doing a roaring trade in their bid to prop up the state coffers. They took my details but I knew that I would not be hearing from them again, so off I headed.

I still had just over half a tank of fuel so I kept heading north towards the road to Kalgoorlie.

I was planning to stop at Naremburn to fuel up but when I got there the petrol station had been closed since noon. Two cars were looking for fuel too. I didn't have enough fuel to make the 70 kms to Merredin but as there is another town 35 kms to the west, I set off on a wing and a prayer that (i) I could make it, and (ii) that it had an open fuel station. Made it! When I opened the tank and shook it, there was not even a splash left.

Fuelled up, it was on to Kalgoorlie. But I had lost too much time and with 200 km to go, it got dark. This is a problem when the high beam is pointing at the sky, I have no glasses and the kangaroos are huge. It was a very unpleasant ride! The road is pretty straight so I was able to use the centre line as a guide. I was very glad to get into Kalgoorlie and find my motel. Day 3 over.

Day 4: Today is Easter Monday in Wait Awhile, so everything is closed. No replacement camera for me.

I went to the Super Pit for a look. It is enormous and apparently still full of gold. I enjoyed watching the workings of the functional mine and then headed off to do the underground tour that I had seen on the information screen. When I found the tour start point, a sign said it was closed until further notice. So I went up to the lookout over town and had a squiz, and then headed to Norseman.

I rode the Eyre Highway a year ago so I wanted to start in Norseman, stop in Eucla for the first night, and then on to Ceduna for the second night. I got to Norseman about 2.30 pm, early. I had a plan, so I stuck to it and had an early day. I had originally planned to spend the night at the motel behind the Caltex but they were booked out so I went to the motel behind the BP. It turned out to be a good move because they had good food and the cheapest Crown Lager I had seen in WA. Day 4: 215 km

Day 5: I left Norseman at 8am and headed across the Eyre Highway. A lot of people call it the Nullarbor but that isn't correct. There has been a lot of rain so the amount of new growth is quite amazing and it is very green. It is a 700 km trip to Eucla and I had to stop at all but one of the road houses for fuel. The bike normally gets 230 km to a tank before reserve but with a headwind that drops to 170 km. So if you ever ride across to WA, keep that in mind. Fuel at Balladonia is \$2.05 a litre and at Mundrabilla it is \$2.04 so I would hate to have a V8 or other gas guzzler.

The Ninety Mile straight is an experience that everyone should do once, but it does go up and down a fair bit, so it's not as bad as it could be. I enjoyed this hardest part of the trip more than the last time. Day 5: 716.5km

Day 6: From Eucla it is a short trip to the border and goodbye WA and hello SA. The trip to Ceduna is only about 500 kms so it was going to be an easier day than yesterday. It is worth stopping and photographing the Gulf from the rest areas at the side of the road - if I had a camera.

Pretty soon the landscape becomes more desolate and you are in the Nullabor. No trees, just low scrub and open country. Lucky for me, it's not very windy, so the trip is not too hard. Before long I'm at the Nullarbor Road House. To get fuel you need to hand over your driving licence or they won't turn on the pump. They say it's because of drive-offs but there is only one road so where could you drive to that can't be found easily? I finally got them to admit it's to stop the paperwork from the drive-offs - that makes a lot more sense. Who likes paperwork?

I cruised into Ceduna early afternoon and bought a new camera for a good price, considering it is a long way from anywhere. Then I went down to the pier to take the mandatory sunset pictures. I got talking to a couple of the young boys fishing from the pier. They had a good catch of squid. One of them mentioned that his dad had accidentally knocked the other dad's fishing rod off the pier. I asked "The water is not that deep, why don't you snorkel down and get the rod back?" The answer was "There have been great white sharks in the bay but you're welcome to try." I think the rod can stay there for the time being. Day 6: 500km

Day 7: I had done the coast from Ceduna to Whyalla last year so this time I wanted to go the short way and headed straight to Port Augusta. This is wheat country and very dry. I got into Port Augusta in the early afternoon, and, having spoken to some local people at an earlier fuel stop, took Horrocks Pass to get on the back road to Adelaide.

Horrock's Pass is a great road with the first set of corners for a very long time and hence a lot of fun. It is just a bit short, but still much better than going down the main drag into Adelaide. I got into Claire just before dark and decided that would do for the day. Day 7: 680km

Day 8: started with a hot breakfast in the motel dining room and then I set off on the short ride to Adelaide. Today was going to be a short day because I wanted to go to the Adelaide Zoo and see the Pandas.

I stopped at Pittman's Yamaha on the Main North Road and, to my surprise, they had wet weather gear in fat-bastard size. I normally have to order in, so I now had wets again.

Motel found, I dropped my gear off and went to the Zoo. It was a Friday and not very busy so I could get very close to the Pandas and spend as long as I wanted with them. It was an experience that I thoroughly enjoyed and well worth the effort. Day 8: 135.5km

Day 9: I left Adelaide and headed up the Princess Highway towards Melbourne, turning off at Stirling and heading towards Strathalbyn.

The road starts out as Mt Barker Road, then becomes Strathalbyn Road and is a ripper as it winds its way to Echunga and then on to Strathalbyn through Macclesfield. I had not heard of this Road before and recommend it if your ever over that way. After fuel at Strathalbyn it's on to Wellington and the ferry over the Murray River and on to the Coorong and the Princess Highway again.

I followed the coast road to Kingston and Robe, which is not famous for robes by the way, Beachport, and then back through Millicent to Mt Gambier. Day 9: 527 km

Day 10 started with a traditional Macca's breakfast and then a run down to Nelson and the coast road all the way home. The new speed limits on the GOR make it a lot less fun, and, as usual, I saw plenty of our blue friends along the way. Welcome back to Victoria.

Day 10 finished, 662 km for the day and a grand total of 5,212 kms for the trip.

Rod Silver