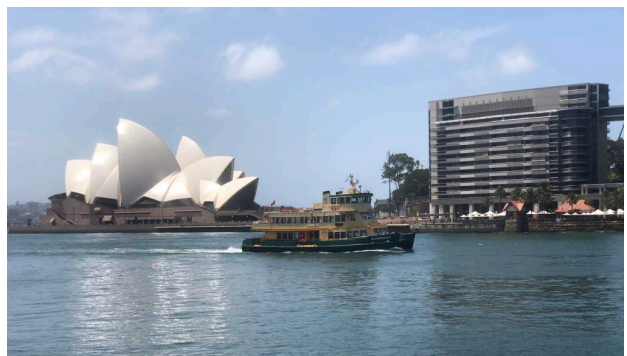


Ride with AB

Visiting my Mates, Old Stomping Grounds
& Riding in Tasmania, Australia

February 17th – March 5th, 2019

Start Here



Dallas, TX to Sydney, NSW to all around Tasmania, back to Sydney, & then home to Dallas

As always, before finishing one ride, one must plan the next one. This trip has been in the works since my [Aussie Mates visited the US to traverse Colorado ++](#) in July of 2017. Trips like this are hard to plan and coordinate. After a short delay and through Bryan's perseverance the dates were set. As I started making reservations for airline tickets, motorbike hire and a few hotels, the excitement was hard to contain.

Since living in Sydney, (2006-2010), almost a decade ago, this was my first trip Down Under. Upon landing at Kingsford airport everything became familiar and I felt right at home.

Let's meet the riders. We have one common thread, JPMorgan, some still there, the rest pursuing other interests.



From left to right, Mark Coles, Pete Corea, me "AB", Simon Katz (the only smart non-JPMer), Andrew Limmer, Mike Smith "Smithy", "Farmer" Dave Miles "Milesy" and Bryan Gray.



Unfortunately, Dave Hampton could not make this ride. Dave is the catalyst that got most of us riding again (and together). Dave hosted a company Christmas party in 2007 and him and I started talking motorbikes. Next thing I knew, I was on eBay motors buying a motorbike and shortly thereafter riding with Dave. Ditto for Bryan and Pete.

Milesy planned a trip "The Wrong Way Around" to Byron Bay, and the rest is history. It was the most organized trip I have ever been on and I learned so much from that experience. You taught me how to tour, thank you Farmer Dave!

Day "Pre Ride -3/4" - DFW to LAX to SYD, Sydney, 14,038 KMs, leave Sunday 02/17/19 arrive Tuesday 02/19/19

Home to DFW, 30 minutes, reply to some emails and texts, DFW to LAX 3.5 hours, a short nap and 3 episodes of Friends, LAX to SYD, 14.5 Hours, 2 movies and about 5 hours sleep. Overall, it was a long but a pleasant and safe flight.



I wish the seats were this wide



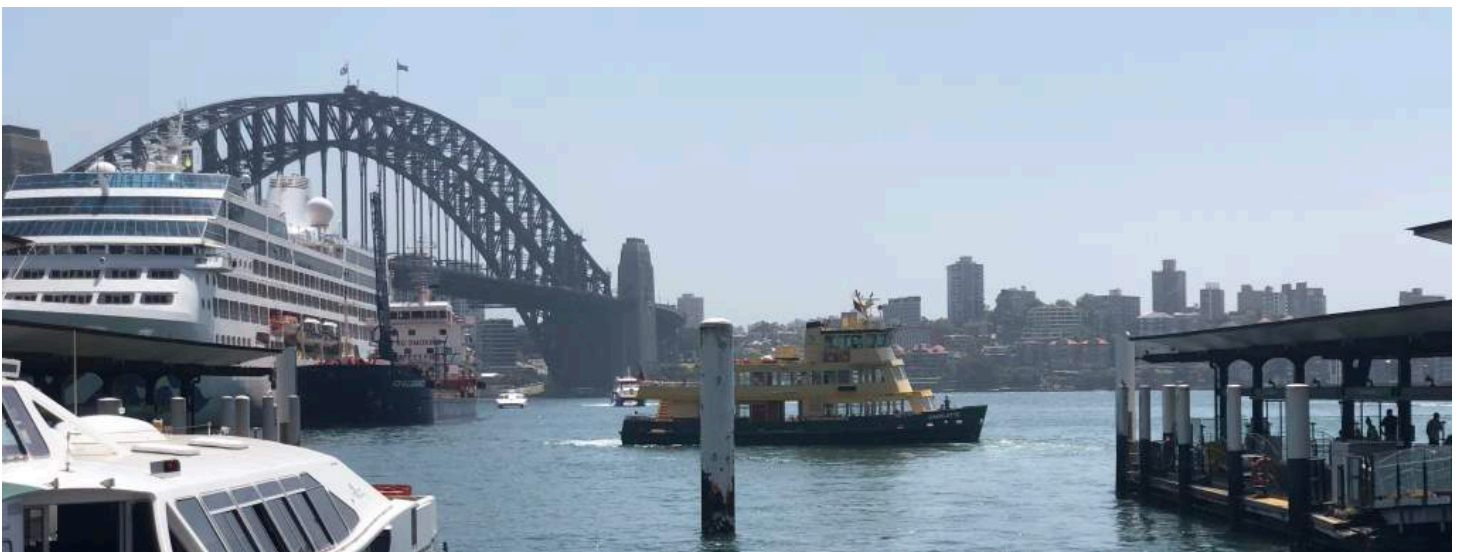
Day "Pre Ride -2" - Sydney, NSW, Australia, Tuesday 02/19/19

Arriving in Sydney was thrilling, everything very familiar and very nostalgic. After checking into my hotel and refreshing a bit, I wanted to stretch out and walk. I headed down to the harbour (Aussie spelling with a "u") for some exercise and pictures.

One of the most iconic landmarks in the world, the Sydney Opera House was completed in 1973, with an original cost estimate of \$7 million that ultimately ballooned to 102 million. Added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2007. More than 8.2 million people visit the opera house every year.



I have always been fascinated by the ferries and its traffic in Circular Quay. I am so glad that they still have the old style ferry boats.



Also, in Summer, Sydney is a popular cruise ship destination.



The Manly ferry, Freshwater still in service, I have ridden it many times.



Central Business District (CBD) Sydney. There is so much simultaneous construction going on that navigating foot traffic is difficult, driving must be a nightmare, yet it all felt progressive.



One of the things I miss the most is people watching in cities. Sydney is perfect for that. The leisurely lifestyle of just sitting on the grass and enjoying an afternoon with friends is enviable.



That afternoon, I met up with my mate Dave Hampton, we had a few beers in the Rocks area and headed to Darling Harbour Warf for dinner where we met up with Bryan. Unfortunately, my phone ran out of juice, so no pictures to share. Internet Photos.



Day "Pre Ride -1" - Sydney, NSW, Australia, Wednesday 02/20/19

For having a 10 hour time zone change I slept well and feel pretty good this morning, waking up at around 3:00AM. I decided to continue my adjustment by getting more daylight and exercise. I walked down to Darling Harbour this AM via the Sydney fish market.

Some pictures along the way, the ANZOC bridge



Sydney also has a "Lime" bike share program, biggest difference is all bikes come with a helmet. I wish they did that in the States.



The Sydney Fish Market is a seafood lover's paradise. It reminded me of my trips there during holidays and Christmas.



You can tell I like this place.



I continued my walk to Darling Harbour, eventually stopping for a leisurely breakfast/lunch, all in all, I must have walked 15+ kilometers.





On the way back, I made a stop at Deus Ex Machina Motorcycles. A great recommendation from David Hampton!



This afternoon I am scheduled to pick up the motorbike and later join some of my old JPM colleagues for drinks.

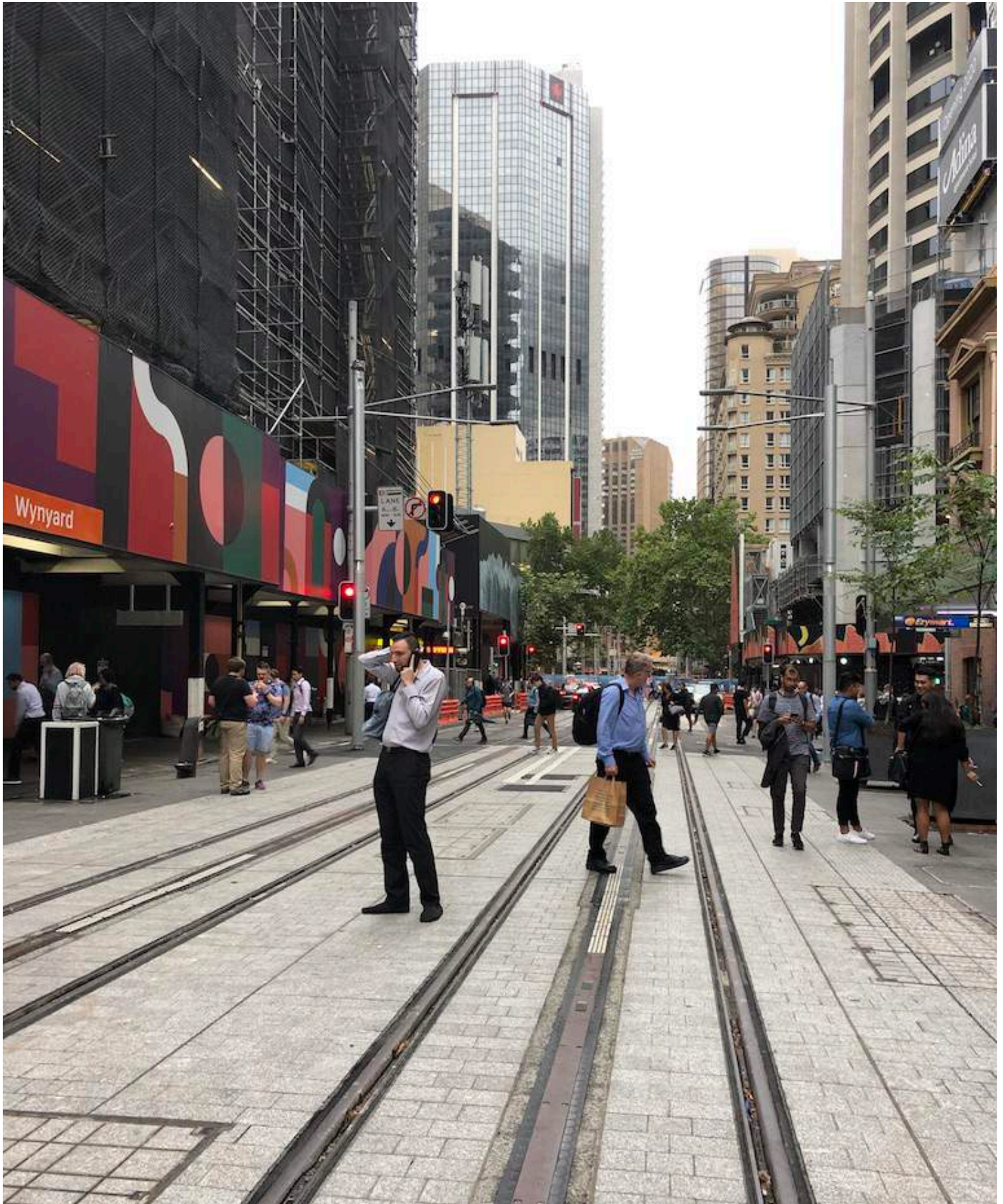
I was a bit nervous given that I had not driven on the "right" side of the road in quite some time. Going over the rental agreement, all I remember, was the hire guy saying "if you drop the bike it will cost \$\$\$ to fix, capped by your excess of \$5,000". Somewhat annoyed, I told the hire dude, "You know what? Fu\$k it, I can afford it", after those kind words he finally stopped talking costs. Sometimes you gotta say "what the fu\$k and go for it" ha ha.



The bike was great, a brand new 2019 BMW R1250GS just a bit newer than my 2016 R1200GSA. It was familiar and that made it easy to ride.

I rode around for a few KMs and then mentally arranged the bike packing for an early morning departure the next day.

Next, I went into CBD to meet and greet the JPM crowd. CBD is going through a transformation with the addition of the trolley on George St.



The meeting place was eden bar & restaurant.



The Crew, Watsy, Sky, Bryan, Balloch with an "H", Tony and I. Missing are the early leavers, Natesh and Mark Davison, we had a great time.



Day "1" - Sydney, NSW, to Thredbo, NSW, 537KMs, Thursday 02/21/19

Bryan met me at my hotel to help me navigate to our meeting place, C Side Café, just south of the airport. There was light rain and a bit of traffic. Our route today was through the Royal National Park to Wollongong, then across Macquarie Pass to Cooma to Thredbo, our overnight stop.

Our meeting place, ready to roll.



After Royal National Park, we had a well-deserved rest stop; the elevated seaside highway and The Gong in the far background beyond



Hey, the bike matches my jacket.



The ride through the Royal NP was awesome. The fresh smell of eucalyptus trees accented by a very twisty road with lots of elevation changes. You have to stay alert and focused or pay the insurance excess. As we approached the coast, the sweet smell of the ocean became refreshing.

I am used to riding with a GPS, it helps to draw out the shape of road ahead, especially the turns, so I slowed way down not knowing what is ahead. The road through the park was very narrow without any shoulders. In the US it would have been a one way street. I rode by my mantra, "slow is smooth and smooth is fast".

After our rest, we headed west via the Macquarie Pass.

I thought the road through the Royal NP was twisty and narrow, Macquarie Pass was tighter and narrower in many places and with few barriers to stop you from falling into never-never land.

After over 2,000 feet of ascent, the top turned into an intense fog, with very poor visibility. We stopped at top for another well-deserved break.

Meat Pies at the top of Macquarie Pass, yummy...



We continued our journey towards Cooma, stopping for coffee at Ray Morton Park in Queanbeyan East.



Next up, Cooma, NSW and more meat pies



Anxious to get off the bike, we finally reached Thredbo Village in Kosciuszko National Park, NSW. It was a long day. I began fading at around 4:00PM, but had to keep on concentrating.

After a few refreshments and fish tacos, I was ready to hit the sack.



Day "2" - Thredbo, NSW to Melbourne, VIC, 538KMs, Spirit of Tasmania: Melbourne to Devonport 429 KMs, Friday 02/22/19

I am now waking up at around 4:30AM, far better than the last few nights. The temperature showed 11°C this morning, so I decided to give my heated gear a go, with electric heat, it was warm and toasty leaving Thredbo. The road to Melbourne took us on the famous Alpine Highway.

I remember that road well. 11 years ago, I had a little mishap when a German tourist in a campervan was barreling uphill on the wrong side of the road. To avoid hitting him, I went on the berm and fortunately was able to slow down quite a bit. However, as I was trying to get back on the pavement, the height difference between the berm and the pavement was too big and down to the right I went. I simply slid and did not hit anything. I had some road rash and a few hematoma bruises that eventually healed, leaving only a scar on my forearm. If it wasn't for my gear, I would have been all bloodied. Always remember, ATGATT = All The Gear All The Time.

So this morning was all about "slow is smooth and smooth is fast".

Snowy Hydro Limited, electric power plant feed.



Our next rest stop was Tallangatta, VIC. A small and very quaint little town.





We heard from Andrew and Milesy. They were already in Devonport enjoying a couple of cold ones and smiling.



Next up was getting to the Ferry through Melbourne during Friday night rush hour traffic. It was a long, hot journey, but I had a great navigator in Simon. Thank you again Simon. I would have missed the ferry without you.





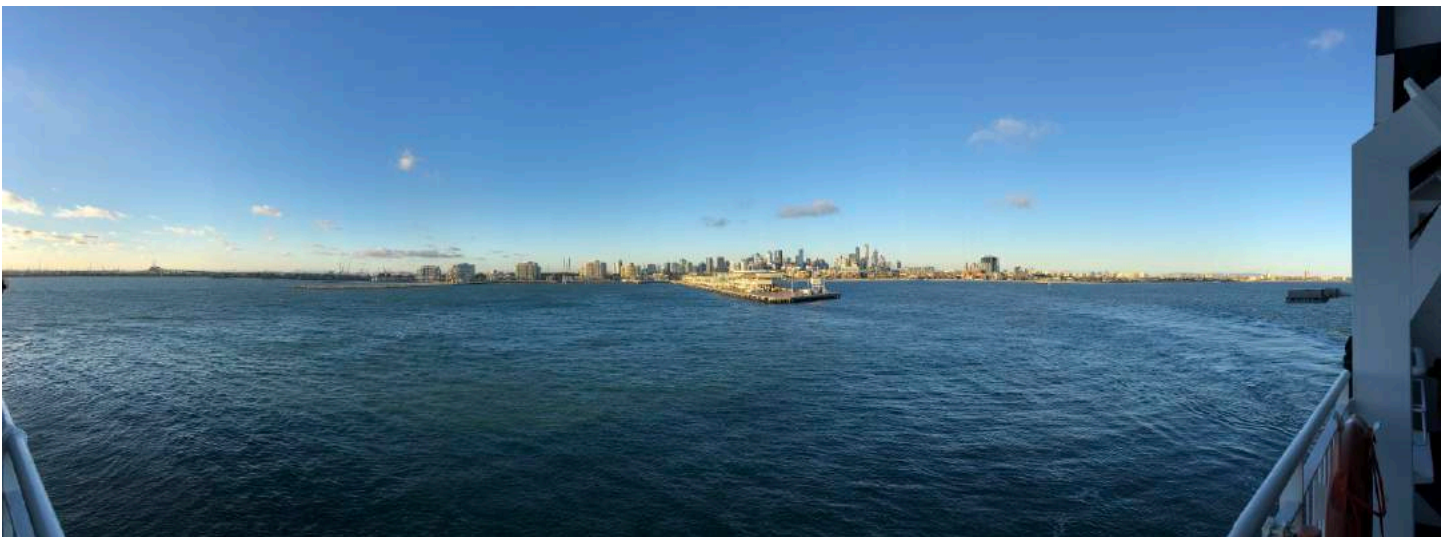
Lots of other bikers had the same idea.



Once all loaded up on the ferry it was time for my favorite beverage.



Next was a few pictures of Melbourne from the ferry







Our luxury accommodations on board.

Over dinner we played Spirit of Tasmania trivia, most notably:

Length: 194 meters,
2 football pitches

Gross Tonnage:
29,338

Avg Speed: 27 Knots

Capacity:
500 cars
222 beds
121 seat beds
1,400 people

Crossing time 9-11
hrs

Distance Melbourne
to Devonport: 429
KM

Fuel consumption:
7,000 liters per hour

Total fuel capacity:
1,222,000 liters.

At fuel pump pricing,
it cost almost
\$2 million to fuel up!

Fresh water capacity:
570 tonnes

Awesome ship!

They had a great dinner buffet on board.



Peter misbehaving before bed!



Day "3" - Devonport, TAS to Burnie, TAS - the long way via a north-western scenic route 349 KMs, Saturday 02/23/19

I am just starting to get in the groove, had the best sleep yet. It must have been the gentle rocking of the ferry. Riding distances in Australia measured in KMs is similar to riding in the US measured in miles. 2 back to back 500 KM days was tough. Really looking forward to today's more moderate pace of 349 KMs.

An early wakeup at 5:15 AM, with an expected ride-off time at 5:50 AM, still twilight out. I was glad that the Bikes are still upright.



This morning we meetup with Miley and Andrew for breakfast in Devonport and were blessed with a perfect weather forecast for our first ride in Tassie.

A great start at the Laneway café. Nothing like waking up to avocado toast, poached eggs, and coffee, Yummy



We wanted a group photo now that all 8 of us were together. Once in Burnie, I asked this random mate to take a photo for us. This mate was the most enthusiastic photographer I have ever met, organizing and realigning us from this:



to this. He even trade marked the picture with his fingerprint. And the banter about fingerprint photos continued non-stop for the next 8 days. (More to follow)



Burnie



On the way out west we explored various picturesque attractions. The first one is the Table Cape Lighthouse. Simply a serene magical place, that made one forget everything about big cities and cement.

On the way, "Farmer" Dave Milesy thought he died and woke up in heaven, I did too.



The day was so clear and the air so fresh. Notice the moon near the top left.

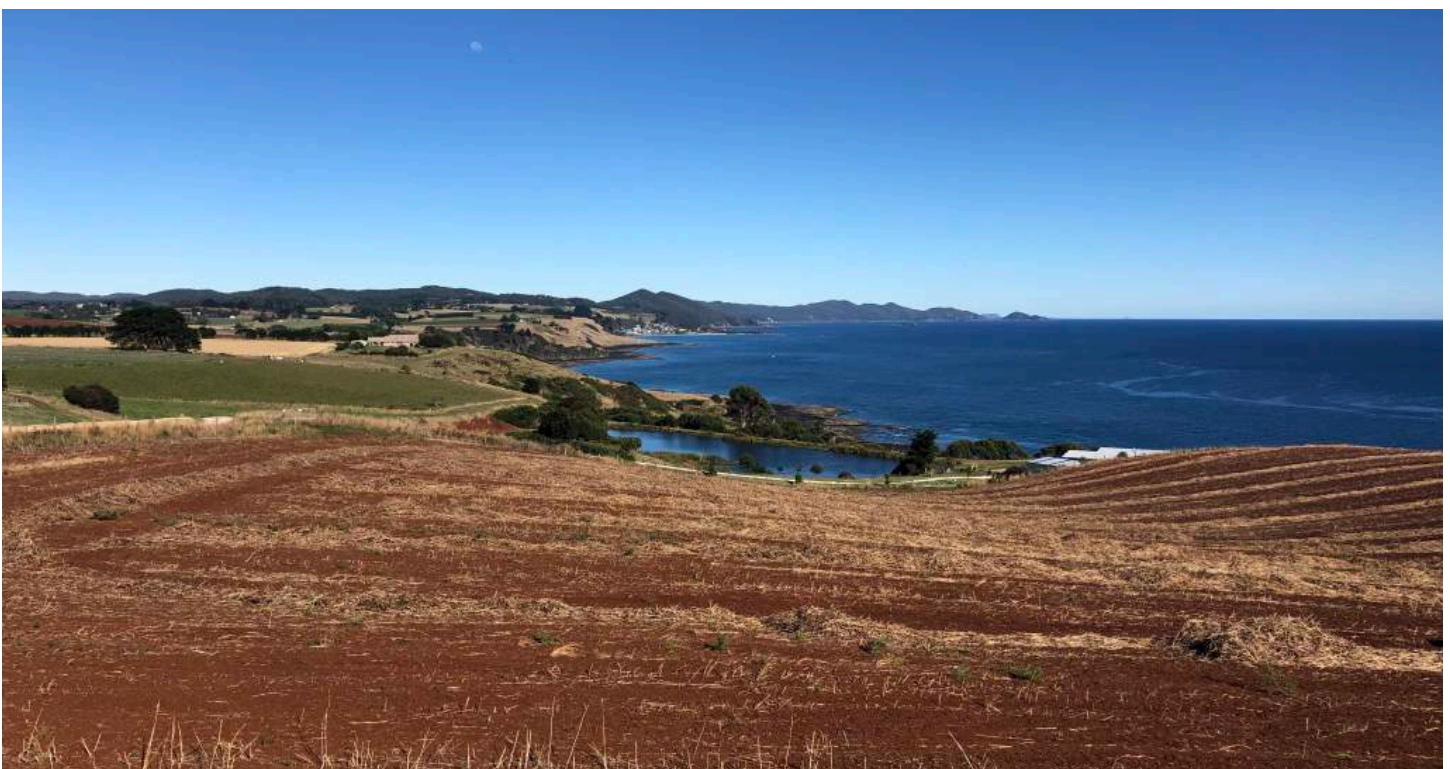


Table Cape Lighthouse was first lit up on 1 August 1888. It stands about 25 metres (82 ft) high and has a diameter of 8.5 metres (28 ft) at the base. Still in operation today.





Mark, Milesy and Andrew hogging the viewing platform



Crystal clear water





The bikes got a bit dusty.



A great place for a picnic.



Next up is Stanley, a quiet fishing village on the north shore just by the foothills of the mezzanine





Done 100+ KMs, time for lunch at Moby Dicks Breakfast bar.



The mates taking themselves way too seriously. Planning the next JV, EVO terminals for beggars. More on that later, I got to keep you reading, ha ha.



Fresh fruit salad and Greek yogurt



As we made our way west, the road turned to gravel and shortly thereafter, we hit a dead end. The only way to get closer to Cape GRIM was through private land, unfortunately we had to turn around. Cape GRIM has the freshest most unpolluted air on earth. (Internet photo below)



A nice ride back to Burnie and dinner at the Baltimore, a short walk from our hotel.



The food was delicious and the laughter and camaraderie unequalled.

After several attempts, our friendly waitress gave up, so we had the table next to us take the photo.

Ms. Congeniality did soften up after we left her a tip that she thought was too much.

A much more composed "FINAL" photo below.



Day "4" - Burnie, TAS to Strahan, TAS - 261 KMs, Sunday 02/24/19

The day kicked off with brekky at Food and Brew. While Mark and Smithy planned the route using old-fashioned maps, we all reminisced on last night's dinner at the Baltimore. Wait Mark & Smithy, you said there is only one road to get from point A to point B in Tasmania.



The food this trip has been great. Easily a 5-7 lb. weight gain trip between all the meals, the lack of real exercise, and the beer.

Somehow all these photos popped at the bottom of the group picture on the next page. All the bad mates are missing.





As you can see we had really bad food. Burnie, the city of "memories" maker



Riding out of Burnie on the Murchison Hwy, we stopped for a quick picture at the Cam River Signs sign in memory of the Cann River Hotel. (Need to keep reading to find out...)



The road to Strahan was on the Murchison Hwy, which was also being ridden by the famous Charley Boorman. He is the English TV presenter, travel writer, and actor also known for his enthusiasm for motorbikes, as demonstrated in several documentaries of his travels. His friend, actor Ewan McGregor, is another crazy famous motorbiker. Well we didn't see Charley, but we shared the same road.

A stretch stop at the Hellyer Gorge Rest Area.



Next up, Lunch in Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park.



Awesome views, but more amazing was the weather, 20°C sunny and no wind.



🎵 King of the hill, top of the heap, I want to wake up in Tassie everyday. 🎵 😊



Somehow, the three bad boys missing in the collage, managed to get lost on the single road to Strahan.



At the Cradle Mountain Visitor Center, I spotted the ever illusive Tassie Devil.



A stroll through the Pencil Pine Falls took us right back to nature.



Next rest area, Zeehan, just a few KMs from Strahan. Zeehan has the biggest Post Office to town size ratio that I have ever seen and some really neat architecture.



And finally, our arrival at Strahan. Although the ride was only 261 miles, it was a full day. Post Offices must have been on sale in Tassie. Another huge one in Strahan.



Strahan is better known for its water front, Macquarie Harbour.



The kiddo's decided to have some fun before dinner:



and the adults joined in the fun, VBs and Bundy and coke, (Bundaberg Rum), I have never seen a bottle of rum evaporate that fast. It must be fresh Tassie air.



A short walk to dinner at the Strahan Wharf on the Strahan Historic Foreshore track.



Another trademark finger picture, this time mine.



Truly a beautiful waterfront on a calm relaxed evening.



Dinner at the Wharf.



Andrew's newly minted word, Hungry + Angry = "Hangry". Hangryly awaiting Dinner? These blokes look "Bundy" happy.



My dinner, grilled octopus and veggies. It was delicious, with a view to die for.



On the road, you always encounter oddities and novelties. You cannot make this stuff up.



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