



## **11 Days - West Coast Ride – December 2011**

As has become customary in December a group of “bikers” get together and see how far they can ride and what tour they can plan over this period. While most people are packing cars, we get our bikes ready for a ride. Last year was 8 days in Swaziland, this year the West Coast, what started out as a 9 day excursion turned into an 11 day ride, not that anybody is complaining. Not quite sure how the 9 days landed up on our badge, let’s blame a typo!!! We all regard this as “the norm” to pack our panniers and take to the road.

John was the instigator of this ride and it took about 5 minutes to convince the rest of us – us, by the way, is, Anne, Wymoth, John/Jenny and Pat. The only things different from this ride to that of the Swazi ride is that this time Anne rides a R1200R, I ride my OWN bike and John now rides a GSA. We all decided that this ride needs a cloth badge, this was designed with input from all parties and will be proudly worn from now on, and each and every ride we arrange will have a badge.



*The Swazi Bikers 2010*

Anne – Wymoth – John – Pat (Jenny took Pic)



*The West Coast Bikers 2011*

Anne – Wymoth – Jenny – John - Pat

The route decided on and plotted into the GPS was – Johannesburg, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 11 – Vryburg – Kakamas – Okiep – Port Nolloth – Lamberts Bay – Durbanville – Oudtshoorn – Gariep Dam – Johannesburg, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 12.

As always it took a long time before the date finally arrived to pack out panniers and polish the bikes, (their last polish for some time). The next morning around 07h00, the group came together at our house, had a sit down breakfast and off we went. It is always exciting to set off on a trip like this. Now many people (those “not real bikes” or “other” bikers) may think we were daft to do 11 days of biking covering over 4 000km. For us it was all the days we had spare, if we had 20 days it would have been a 20 day trip, maybe someday, when I retire, I will do this. The weather was pretty kind to us, it had rained the night before our departure and that was the last rain clouds we saw for the rest of the ride. I was elected the ride leader and that was how it stayed for the entire trip, me, Anne, Pat, John/Jenny. Each leg of the journey had been planned and all accommodation booked and paid for. Maybe something to think about before you go on a trip like this – know where you are going to sleep the night and how far the days ride is, this way you can plan your stops and know what to expect and when.

All the rides where at a leisurely pace of between 130 and 140km/h. surprisingly, the roads were relatively quiet and we had very little traffic to contend with. Getting “out of” Gauteng is always a lengthy process but once you shrug off the Gauteng roads the countryside opens up and you feel a lot more at ease on the bikes. We kept to a 2 hour ride and then fuelled the bikes, the R and the GS required more refueling although considerably lighter on fuel than the GSA’s. The R produced figures of around 5.1 while the GSA’s showed fuel figures of around the 6.5 L/100km.

#### Night 1 – Vryburg – Castello Guest House – 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2011 - 369 Km

The first nights stop was in Vryburg, a B&B called Castello’s. Now getting to the place may scare a few people off, the little town of Vryburg is terrible, the main road is littered with great big potholes, the traffic was terrible and the crowds of people even worse. Temperatures pushed the mercury up to the late 30’s which did not make for comfortable riding and the town did not help either. The B&B however made up for the rest of the town. The service was first class; if they gave stars for service we would have given 10 stars. The young lady, Sarah, that ran the B&B (all on her own) was superb. She cooked dinner and breakfast that was great, some of the best meals we had during the entire trip. Her service earned her a huge tip and I really think she was very happy with the early Xmas present. If this was the standard for the entire trip, we were in for a great time!!! One great way to cool off and get rid of the days sweat is to hop in the pool and luckily all the places we stayed had such a luxury, some even heated!!



#### Night 2 – Kakamas – Vergeleegen Guest House – 24<sup>th</sup> December 2011 - 480 Km

The second day saw us on the road to Kakamas and even that early in the morning the temps showed what they were going to do to us for the rest of the day. Late 20's by 08h00 and not long after that we hit the 40's and this was the temp for most of the day to our next stop. At that temp you dare not open your visor to try get some fresh air, the air is so hot it burns you, so it was closed visors and sweat. Something we did was actually do, Anne actually started it, we soaked our buffs and put them on soaking wet (why had we not thought of this earlier?) this cooled you down for at least an hour, it actually worked great!! So from now on it was wet buffs at every stop. The roads were actually very good, except for some of the town roads especially one little town, Delareyville, this was voted as the town with the worst road of the entire trip. It is totally disgusting how a town can let the road become almost impassable. The road leading up to the town is great, the road leading out of the town is great, but the actual town's main street is disgusting, what do they do with the rates and taxes the poor people of that town pay? Buy fancy 4x4's to tackle the ever worsening roads?

Upington's Spur played host to our lunch that day, anything to get out the heat. With aircons pumping it felt like we had landed in an oasis, it was great and we spent more than the planned lunch hour here, any excuse to sit and soak up the coolness for just a bit longer. John and I even volunteered to watch the biking gear while the ladies went off shopping. Even this had to come to an end and we had to leave this sanctuary to tackle the heat of the day for the last leg to Kakamas. Here we had a petrol stop and met up with some BMWCC members, Raymond and Anneleen Geldenhuys and Peter and Rita Short in their cars.

The road from Upington does not leave much to the imagination, it is straight, it is hot, and it is unimaginative. I am sure they sent the learner road makers out there to plan and construct those roads and because of the heat they made the roads a straight as possible, so as to cut down on construction times. Maybe those "other" bikes would love this, if they could travel that far. Just short of Kakamas was the next B&B place called Vergeleegen. You approached a few mountains and as you descended you were confronted with the greenery and vines, looked like a quilted blanket. There was a channel of water running alongside the road feeding the farms with water. After the previous few hundred kms, this was really a welcome site. The B&B was really a well maintained and luxury place, rooms were large, cool and well furnished. The pool, although minute, was a welcomed distraction and was enjoyed by all. There was even a bit of time for a walk about and taking of pictures. The service did not, however, match the surroundings, maybe because it was Xmas eve, not sure, but one felt that you had to order your food fast, eat and go!!



Xmas presents had to wait for the next morning, after breakfast. Breakfast that day was consumed with a dash of speed; we headed back to the verandah to dish out our Xmas presents. Each one had packed in something small for the rest of the group, so if you thought you were making space in your panniers, think again, it was one for one and the space never reduced.

One would expect a 4 star B&B to be a bit more professional when it came to settling your accounts. We went to pay and all three room accounts were wrong. I had payed the full room rate when booking a few months prior to the trip, yet when I came to pay, this was not reflected. I did not have my deposit slips with me (next time I will most certainly carry all paperwork of accommodation payments – this happened 3 times). After some words, they “found” the payment in their system, rectified the bill and off I went. It took forever to settle the bills that morning. So rating the B&B – Accommodation is fantastic, service is below average, but still worth the visit (just take you deposit slips!!)



Night 3 – Okiep – Okiep Country Hotel – 25<sup>th</sup> December 2011 - 306 Km.

We decided to break this ride with a visit to Augrabies Falls; this was not far off our route and seeing we were so close it was the only logical thing to do. First stop was fuel and some annoying “gentlemen”, in a rundown car, which had been at the bottle a bit early that Xmas morning, or maybe had not stopped since the night before. The road to the falls was past many little villages and farms, some wine, some raisins, one could see many cement patches where the fruit was dried although none was to be seen that day. The Falls were not what I had imagined they would be, maybe the wrong time of the year to visit them, next time I will check on the rainy season in the area. It was as hot as hell and the falls did not do much to make the ride and the walk worthwhile, at least we can say “we were there”.



Apart from the heat there was nothing to complain about with regards the ride, the scenery varied from sparse to mountains, from red sands to green shrubs. Our next planned stop and our Xmas lunch, was of all places, Pofadder. Now how many people (except the residents of Pofadder) can say they stopped there for Xmas lunch. Now unless you have been there you won't understand, the f'all grows 1.5m high and is the colour of naught!!!! We stopped at the only place you could stop, the petrol station and cafe. The petrol attendant turned out to be the waiter as well. Our lunch consisted of Jaffels, Pies and Curried Vetkoek. Now how many can boast a Xmas spread like that. I am sure it will be a Xmas lunch we will remember for many a year, beat that all you jetsetters out there!!!



After that scrumptious Xmas lunch it was back on the road again, we still had to reach Okiep before Father Xmas returned to the North Pole, a place I would not have minded being, for the coolness, that time of day. It was in the 40's again and that meant wet buffs. The last stretch to Okiep was uneventful. The temps remained high and speed nor open jackets helped much to cool one down. We soldiered on hoping that the next stop would have a pool and some aircons.



The GPS took us to a spot on the highway next to Okiep, looking right, I think all our hearts sank; the area we stopped alongside did not look like it would have a hotel, maybe a shebeen, but not a hotel. It was with hesitation that we road into Okiep to find our accommodation for the night. I am sure John thought he had made a mistake with this one. We found the hotel, now that saying "never judge a book by its cover" could not have been more appropriate than now. The hotel was a site for sore eyes in this little town. Okiep, in its hey-day must have been a great bustling little place, since the closure of the Copper Mine it died; it has unemployment rate of some 75%. This hotel had hosted some well known people, from Parliament, the music industry and now us. The food turned out to be the best of all; they say never trust the food if the chef is thin, well let me tell you, you can trust this food!! I can assure you, the chef tests ALL her dishes!!!

Just as a matter of interest, we remained on the N14 Highway from the start of the trip, in Johannesburg, to the town of Springbok, where it ends some 1 150 km later.



Night 4 – Port Nolloth – Scotia Inn Hotel – 26<sup>th</sup> December 2011 - 135 Km.

The next leg to Port Nolloth was a very short one; some 135 kms only, so we set off a bit later than normal. The road was very good and as we got closer to the sea you could feel the temps dropping, we left in the high 30's and very soon we were in early 20's. Makes a change from the 40's we rode in the previous day to the 20's, all this within a couple of hundred kilometers. There is somewhat of a mountain pass you go through before you get to the town. The pass is not something to brag about or travel all that way to do, but something that you encounter along the way.



The town is very small and made up mainly of holiday homes, there seemed to be some boats in the harbour. Looked like dredgers of some sort, being so close to the diamond fields I would imagine this to be correct. John/Jenny and Pat stayed over at a friend's house a few kms away in McDougalls Bay. Anne and I settled into the hotel, which was very comfortable, clean and had a great view of the ocean a few meters away.



What we did start to notice as we landed at the West Coast is that service in the various restaurants started to deteriorate, in fact service in general started to get bad even at the filling stations. It seems that they do not employ more staff to cater for the additional holiday makers over the Xmas break. Actually very silly as this is when these small, and not so affluent little towns, could rake in those extra rands. If they served people faster, there would be more bums in seats and that would mean more money in the till. What these places do, is drag out the serving of the food to the max, which in most cases was 1½ hours. It was something that would frustrate the hell out of us and inevitably no tip was left in these instances. Another gripe I have is credit card machines, some of the places do not have and also do not advertise this fact, it is only when the bill arrives that everybody has to jump around scraping the cash together to pay.

With time on our hands and petrol in the tanks we headed off to Alexandra Bay, some 80km away, just to be able to say we went to the most Westerly town that borders on Namibia, in SA. John/Jenny led this ride. Without the luggage and additional weight it was somewhat of a faster ride than the last 1 000 or so kms. We certainly cleared out the pipes on this one; I only hope they did not have speed cameras on this stretch of road. We did not go for the scenery by any means, the town is fenced off and entrance is via a boom gate similar to a border post. Once inside you see absolutely NOTHING. The houses are run down, there are no gardens and we actually thought it was a ghost town as there was hardly anybody to be seen. We were however told that all the houses were occupied; maybe the residents were sleeping off Xmas? We managed to find a Spar shop and settled for some water before returning to Port Nolloth in the same speedily manner, got those 80km behind us in a hurry!!!



That night found us eating in a place that I would not have even walked past if on my own. From the outside it seemed if the owners had not spent anything on the building in years, inside it looked as if the owners had never spent a cent on the decorations. The place was "littered" with things you would pick up on the beach after a major storm, I am sure I saw something from the Titanic hanging in the rafters. A health inspector would have a field day if this place was any closer to a big city. The place was called Anita's Tavern, as can be seen below. Now some may say it is the best food in the West (Coast) I am not too sure about that though, it left some of us with the trots for the next few days, maybe you have to "acclimatize" to this kind of food first. Again speed was not on the menu and it was a good 1½ before the dishes appeared from somewhere out the back. Don't get me wrong – the food is not bad, but not the best either!! Anne and I bid the group a good night and walked back to the hotel, we did not have the luxury of a kombi to take us back to our accommodation, and I suppose the fact that it was right across the street from the hotel!!! They can say what they want, but the sea lapping at the shore is the best sound to put one to sleep and to keep one sleeping. Breakfast was planned for 07h00 as per the notice on the door. John/Jenny and Pat turned up spot on at 07h00 the next morn, only to discover the chef had not arrived yet. With the limited places to eat breakfast we decided to get on our bikes and head back to Okiep Hotel, as this was on the road back to our next stopover – Lamberts Bay. John phoned ahead and booked our breakfast and we made our way as fast as possible as we knew what was waiting for us.



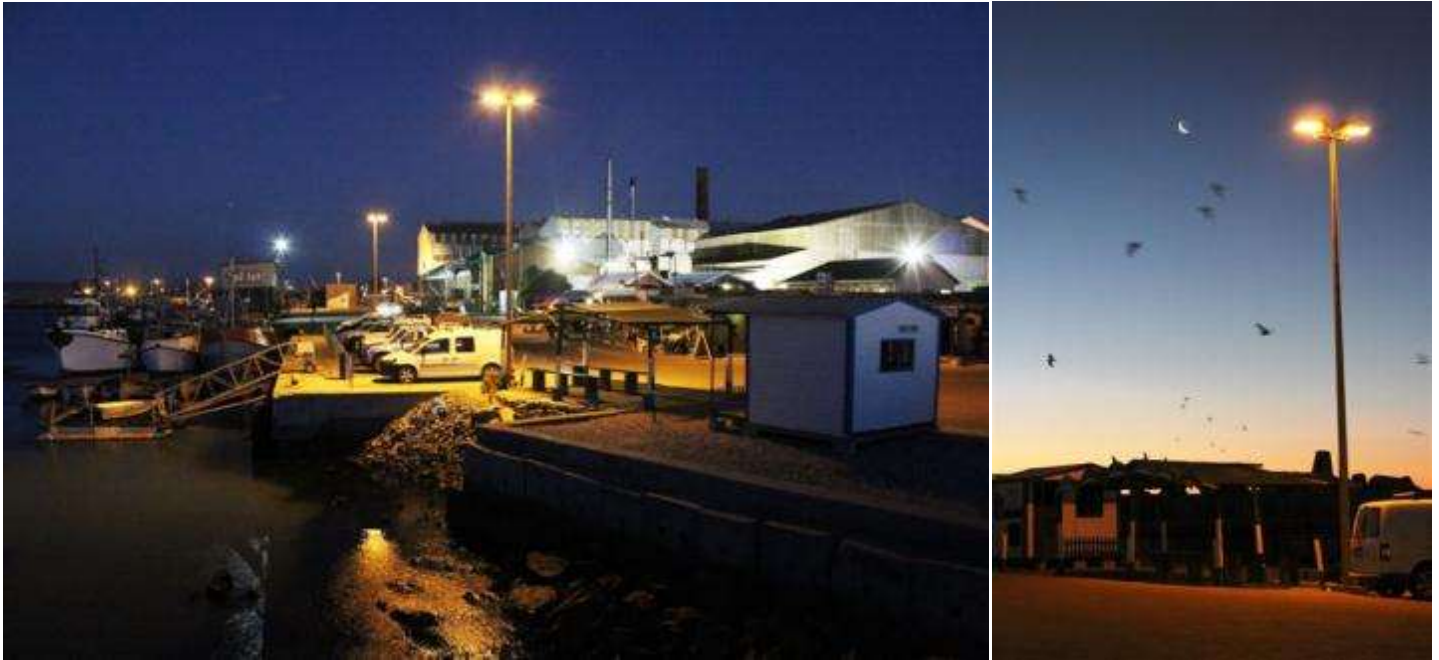
Night 5 – Lamberts Bay – Raston Guest House – 27<sup>th</sup> December 2011 - 535 Km.

The roads were quiet, the temps were great and the sky was blue, now there is not much more a person can ask for when riding a bike, a few twists and turns would have been the cherry on the top. The first 135km, to Okiep was a 2<sup>nd</sup> time round ride, so we stepped it up a bit. Okiep Hotel supplied us with a feast of a breakfast and was appreciated by all. The next stretch of road was a pretty straight bit of road with not much in the way of twists or turns. The volumes of traffic had increased though and made passing something one had to judge and take the gap on the odd occasion. The little village of Garries was reached by around 11h00 and was chosen as a refueling point and a bit of a leg stretch. Surprising that even the smallest fuel station has 95 Unleaded, more than can be said up Johannesburg way!! Tanks filled, bladders emptied it was A for away again.

Lamberts Bay is a right turn at Clanwilliam, off the highway, not an entirely unpleasant ride to ride, bumpy in places but not bad at all. A few turns before you land up in the little coastal town. We headed directly to the B&B. Lovely place with a HEATED pool. You may wonder why I say heated, well the temps on these coastal towns are a tad low and standard pools are a bit chilly for my bod. We parked our bikes unloaded the panniers and headed to the Spar to try and get some lunch to eat. A busy place the Spar, must be the meeting place for all the locals. Lunch consumed and into the pool it was to refresh and relax. Pat's brother, Brian and sister-in-law, Roz arrived about a half an hour after us, from Cape Town, to stay the night at the B&B. That night we decided to visit Isabella's Restaurant on the docks. Well let me tell you if you are in the vicinity of Lamberts Bay and you do decide to go out for dinner, give Isabella's a miss. It was the worst service we experienced on the entire trip. We were allocated a table outside, we assumed outside was on a veranda or something, well outside was outside. As the sun set, which in this part of the world is long after my bed time, it started getting bloody cold. I went back to the B&B, to get something warm, and returned with my bike. Being outside, I parked my bike a matter of inches from our table, to try and keep some of the wind off us. John asked me to run the engine every so often to get some heat from the engine.



When we arrive at the restaurant there was firstly no electricity, so we ordered the meals that did not need electricity, the power however was back on in minutes, food however, did not materialize for about 2 hours. It was brought one plate at a time, the first plate of food; mine (cheese and biscuits) was consumed long before the last plate of food (fish) was delivered, to Jenny. The plates were not taken off the table; no waitress came around for drinks etc. After an hour or so the owner appeared and served us for the rest of the time. No tip was left at that table when we finished our meal. Not sure how they expect repeat visits with service like that, but that was the norm down the West Coast. The view made up for the bad service though.



Night 6, 7, 8 – Durbanville – Feathers Lodge – 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> December 2011 - 303 Km.

The next morning it was off to Durbanville via Darling. We started the day off at the fuel station, where there was a terrible traffic jam, everybody seemed to want petrol at once and with only 2 attendants and about 8 pumps, it was chaotic. Cars seem to think that once a bike has filled the tank it MUST make way for a car to pull in, not matter if you are paying still or not. This we experienced at a few filling stations along the route. I moved out the filling station and stopped on the gravel verge waiting for the others, Anne inched past me to make way for another impatient car and unfortunately our panniers connected. The law of physics states, the lighter of the two objects will be deflected if bumped, and true to the law, Anne was bumped over. No damage to her or the bike, pride was dented and she got a fright, which was all. Sometime later we joked about it, but not for a good few kms of riding first to get her nerves settled.

We headed off to a small but well known little town – Darling. This is where Evita lives; if you don't know who that is, you evidently don't live in SA and I am not going to explain either, go visit for yourself. I think if it was not for 'Evita se Perron' the town of Darling would just be another little forgotten place in the sticks!! It is a lovely stop, with friendly service and great traditional SA food. Not only does Evita say 'apartheid was a pigment of your imagination' she also has a splendid gallery with some well know and famous paintings, I am sure you recognize some of them. This little town/village/dorpie is well worth a visit, even if it is off the highway and not on route to anywhere, make the effort and visit 'Tannie Evita se Perron'.



After a light meal it was onto Durbanville – Feathers Lodge. We took the back road to the lodge, what a great ride. The road was smooth, wide and with very little traffic. You pass through wonderful countryside with varying forms of farming and some lovely scenery. That well known landmark – Table Mountain is visible from more than 100kms outside of Cape Town, today all it had was a small cloud perched on the edge of the Table. It was a lovely clear day but as we got closer to our destination, for the day, we could feel the wind that Cape Town is well known for. Not sure if it was the South Easter or what, all I knew it was bloody strong and against us!!



Of all the places we stayed, this was by far the best place (and remained the best of all the places). The place is called Feathers Lodge in Durbanville; you won't find friendlier, more helpful staff anywhere. Nothing was too much for them, what we wanted was done with a smile and a pleasant attitude. When we booked in all our particulars were correct, copies of our deposits attached to our bookings, it was a matter of minutes and we were in our rooms. Don't waste your time with other places in this area, when we head to Cape Town again, this is the place we will be staying from now on. The three nights we spent at Feathers was the best three nights of our entire trip but was over all too soon.

Pat stayed with her brother and sister-in-law, about 1.2kms from the Feathers Lodge, but when standing in their garden, it actually overlooks Feathers.



The next day was “family day” all of us went our separate ways and visited the various forms of family we had in Cape Town. John/Jenny went to Son/Daughter-in-law, Pat to her Brother/Sister-in-law and Anne and I did Mom/Mother-in-law and Sister/Sister-in-law. That night we had been booked to go to the Water Front and eat some German food. Here I was going to see my Daughter and friend (they were down visiting from Phalaborwa). The V&A is a great place to see people of all races, colours and creeds, young and old all enjoying themselves. It is clean, vibrant and has something for everyone, I have yet to see a place similar here in Gauteng, even if we don't have the sea, we could have a place like that!

The final day in Cape Town was spent on a guided tour led by Brian and his wife, Roz. He too, luckily, is a BMW Cape club member and rode an RT, so glad it was not one of those “other” bikes. The morning started off later than normal, heck why rush? We were in Cape Town, where people have calendars not watches!!! We headed off to Houtbay along the N2, boy oh boy, did that wind show us what it could do with these out of towners, I think the CT boys are so used to this wind they have a different style of riding their bikes. What I did notice in CT is that the bikes are generally smaller, older models and lots of scooters. Did not see all that many bikes at all, on our tour of the peninsula, just plenty bloody GP cars!!!



We could not have asked for a better day to do the tour around the peninsula, there were clear blue skies with the odd cloud, actually not that much wind for CT and the roads were magic. Chapman's Drive is well worth the queue for the toll gate/boom at a reduced cost of R20 for bikes. Glad these chaps don't do tolls up in our areas, we would never get anywhere. The ride has some lovely sweeps and turns, only gripe; it is hard to appreciate the scenery riding the bike. Luckily, for this ride only, I had Anne as pillion taking the pics, to show me later. We stopped at a lovely spot at the bottom on the Chapman's Drive, Noordhoek and had some lunch, the place was packed and I feared another 2 hour wait, but not so, it was the fastest service we experienced the entire trip. Now if they can do it, why can't the rest of the West Coast do it? After a lovely lunch it was back “home”, well Brian's home. He finished off the tour with a look at his toy trains!! Not sure if the words “toy trains” are the correct words to use, they look to expensive to be called toys. Brian has spent years building these tracks with all that went with them, buildings, shops etc. any kids dream room, the boys and their toys!!! Well with such bad weather in CT what else does one expect, can't venture out doors in the cold and wet winters!!!



It was here in Brian's driveway that I sort of dropped my bike and sort of cracked a rib or two. A slight misjudgment of my momentum, in his steep and awkward driveway, saw me go down like a dead ox. The bike did not sustain any injury except a bit of powder coating that needs re-doing, I came down hard with my arm under me and the rest is history. I felt every bump in the road from Cape Town to Johannesburg, that I can assure you. Although I am riding the 650 to work, I am staying off my big boy for a while, just till I mend a bit more. Even with the sore ribs I still enjoyed the riding for the last days of our trip.

Night 9 – Oudtshoorn – Best Little Guest House in Oudtshoorn – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011 - 417 Km.



The road towards Oudtshoorn is pretty decent, with some definite stopovers planned. We had chosen the Route 62 from start to finish on this ride; previously we did parts of it but could not say we did the entire Route 62 as yet. Up and over Du Toits pass, Wellington then onto the actual start of Route 62. This is what roads should be like, smooth, mostly wide and with twists and turns, must have something to do with all the mountains in the area, you gotta get yourself some of them there mountain roads!!!! The first stop was the Country Pumpkin in Barrydale, the road there was pleasant, great scenery and something to keep one busy with, no nodding off on this stretch, not so John!!

The Country Pumpkin, for those that don't know, is a biker friendly, roadside restaurant, which serves great and ample portions. No matter what time of day you get there you will always find a few bikes of various nationalities parked there, strangely even those American machines, must be the furthest point they can reach from Cape Town, under their own steam. After a great plate of food it was off to the next and most famous of all places – Ronnies sex Shop.



Another one of those places that attracts a lot of bikers and some poor fools that thought it was a real Sex shop, sorry chaps, no Playboy magazines or edible undies to be bought here. If it's some food and refreshments and pictures you want, then you came to the right place. No biker worth his mettle passes here without stopping. It is just one of those 'done things'. The ladies again added some T-shirts to their already overloaded panniers. One thing I can say about Ronnie is that he the most trusting man we met, the card machine was not working and Pat did not know if she had enough cash on hand, Ronnie said "no problem just EFT me when you get home", show me another stranger that would say that, most people want money upfront or you have to sign in blood before you put a foot out their establishment. A T-shirt and the obligatory pic of the shop is a must-do before you head further and in our case it was Oudtshoorn for the night.

What is left of Route 62 is not what you call great, interesting or exciting; it is just a road you have to ride to get from Ronnies sex Shop to your next destination. Just before Oudtshoorn we had our very first police block, painless and pleasant, licenses checked, written down and off we went, no problems. The stop for the night at The Best little Guest House, was, I think, the most disappointing of all the stops. Not that it was tacky or badly furnished or anything like that, it was neat, tidy and quite pleasant. The attitude of the owners was what made it "not so great". As we walked in, still dripping with sweat from the ride and the heat, the first thing the lady wanted was FULL payment, up front, although we had already paid a 50% deposit some months prior to our arrival. What also p'd me off was the difference in price from what was quoted to us, I only discovered this on my return, when I went through my booking e-mails, and what we ended up paying. Price quoted in e-mail was R500 per room per night; price paid was R600 per room per night. On top of that they charge you R40, extra, for the use of the aircons (in our case) or underfoot heating in your room. After some words of "you can wait until I at least change" I went and paid the lady to keep her quiet. Also there were no refreshments, except bottled water, available here either. Something we decided on, for our next ride of this nature, all accommodation must be Dinner/Bed & Breakfast, the last thing you want to do after a long day's ride is to go looking for food and refreshments. So the Best Little Guest House won't be seeing a few of us again. This turned out to be *Not the Best Guest House in Oudtshoorn*.

That night was New Year's Eve and here we sat in Oudtshoorn, hungry. We found some takeaway menus and took a vote, pizza was decided on, orders worked out, we phoned pizza place... no answer, they were closed. The next best - Spur, we placed our detailed and large order and luckily we had the use of a car, friends of ours from Mossel Bay, to fetch the take-aways or it would have been a few bike trips!! Not one of us saw the clock strike 12 that night, we would have to see the New Year the next morning, we were sure it would be there when we woke. The next morning was a quick breakfast and we hit the road again to our next accommodation, the last of our trip.

#### Night 10 – Gariep Dam – A-Damsview - 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 - 569 Km.

This part of the route we had all done previously, glad to say, the road had not deteriorated since our last trip. What we did start to notice was the traffic had picked up and most if not all the cars had a strange GP suffix on their number plates. Plenty big 4 x 4's loaded with kids and luggage, poor people, imagine being cooped up in a tin can for all those hours and hearing "are we there yet?", at least on a bike you could almost feel your surroundings. Traffic jams and stop-n-go were oh-so-easy for us on the bikes. The road through to Graaf Reinet was not an unpleasant road; Colesburg seems to be doing something at the South side of the town, where the various roads cross. It looks as if they are building a massive fly-over, about time, that junction of roads near Merino Inn can get hectic during these times. From Colesburg it was on the highway to Gariep Dam. This was a plain straight forward highway ride, all one had to do was remain awake, check the mirrors on the odd occasion, for those cars that come out of nowhere and ride like a bat out of hell. Just one near miss – a black Merc came flying past as I was about to pass a car, the comms between me and Anne paid for themselves again and with a warning yell from her I was able to swing back and avoid being run over!! Thanks Anne.



Soon the sign board for Gariep Dam was seen, turn taken we headed for our last port of call, not knowing what to expect or were to find the place, was the only one that we could not pick up on the GPS, was still too new. After phoning for directions we found the place, and what a place. It had a great view of the dam and as the lady said “was still very new” as could be seen by the incomplete paving etc. What a great place, the furnishings were top class, no expense had been spared here and for the price it was a bargain. We had just come from a R640/night place to what was effectively a R500/night place, from 2 stars to 5 stars and the price just went down, go figure that out, heck we did not even pay extra for the aircons or flat screen DSTV!!! As this was self catering we decided to end off the lovely trip with some decent food, we decided to have a braai, I fired the meat and the ladies tossed the salad, all homemade ingredients!!! No wonder the place was named A-Damsview, dam, it had a great view! We had dinner and watched the sun set, which I might add, was closer to my bedtime than in the Western Cape. What a great sight and end, to what was a great trip with some great people.



Next morning it was a quick breakfast and an earlier than normal start to the day as this was the longest leg of the trip some 632 km and also the last. It was with a heavy heart and very little enthusiasm that we had breakfast and packed the bikes, the get up and go had got up and left us! I don't think any of us wanted to tackle the road that day, not because we were tired, sore or gatvol; we just did not want the trip to end! Finally we summoned up the enthusiasm to mount the bikes and leave behind what must be one of the most peaceful places, a definite “must return” place. Do

yourselves a favour, if you ever want to get away from it all, pack your bags and head to A-Damsview at Gariep Dam, our next visit will be in the heart of winter, just to experience the fire place in the luxury unit.

The highway had more cars that day and we soon landed up at the stop-n-go, jumped the queue and headed off first, no big deal. At the next stop-n-go, the ladies waved us off to the right, still not sure why, we followed the cars and ended up going through Reddersburg before we joined the highway again. This added at least 30 minutes to the route and was really not a pleasant road, plenty bumps and potholes and plenty "einas" from my ribs. Back on the highway and the next stop was for fuel around the Bloemfontein area. Looks like everybody had chosen this spot to refuel and have some refreshments; there was no way we were going to stand in that queue for a sit down meal/refreshments, so it was fuel, Red Bulls, wetting of the Buffs and on the road again. We would rather find a quieter place to stop, if there was one that day.

The plan was to stop just North of Kroonstad for fuel, but nearing the station I could see tons of cars so we pushed on to the next station, some 60km further, John/Jenny however, being heavier loaded, needed fuel more urgently than the rest of us and peeled off at the first stop. We were unable to stop and turn on the highway so decided to carry on to the next stop, hoping that John/Jenny would catch up further on.

We stopped for fuel, filled the tanks, bikes and our tums. Service was surprisingly fast here. So the stop was shorter than expected. Lunch done, goodbyes said to Pat, we tackled the very last leg of the trip. An hour or so later we pulled into our driveway, tired, sad and glad we had arrived safe and sound without any MAJOR incidents.

We had done 11 days of riding, covered some 4 180kms of some of the best roads, had the best weather ever and enjoyed every minute of every day. We left from our house, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2011 and arrived back at the same point on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2012. If you, out there, have never done something like this and have the means, it is something you should try. I cannot see myself, ever, going away on holiday in a car again; there is no other way to enjoy yourself than by bike. Every day is a new adventure.

Thanks to John/Jenny for planning the trip and arranging the accommodations, thanks Pat for your company and arranging the guided tour of Cape Town, thanks Anne for being my extra set of eyes and congratulations on a ride well done.



Cheers

To the West Coast Ride of 2011



Written and enjoyed

By

Wymoth