

Trials Tales



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At trial in the Top end

For our family holidays we like to travel to parts tropical, and I for one, like to top up on my vitamin B stocks. Secondly, I love to spend as much time as possible lollygagging around a pool somewhere and preferably with a gin and tonic in hand. This July we chose Darwin, a place made for much lollygagging and G&T consumption.

Whilst there I was able to catch up with an old friend of trials persuasion to chew the fat on bikes generally and trials in particular. My nearest and dearest says that even on the dark side of the moon I would find someone to talk trials with. While this may be a slight exaggeration, when lunar travel becomes commonplace, who knows?

We had a great chat over the mandatory barbeque, but a melancholy note soured our sojourn, as my friend has a problem. It is an insidious problem that is sorely testing his life and future as a trials rider.

You see Darwin is home to a nearly complete dearth of trials riders. My friend, like a man without a shed, feels hollow; there is no one to ride with.

There he is up there sweltering in the tropical heat with two modern bikes, but no riding buddy. This is almost criminal – he has two bikes!

I did mention the tropical heat because it is not, well...exactly conducive to trials riding. You tend to get pretty sweaty when riding out and about at only 2 miles an hour. A ride in the wet season is akin to wrapping yourself in garbage bin liners before jumping in a sauna.

Even so, there are quite reasonable days in the dry, where a man might assuage a trials mania and get to ride in temperatures that result in the loss of only a gallon or two of precious fluid. Most of us moderately fit old things do that in more temperate climes anyway.

Surely, the Top End with its exotic wildlife and stunning scenery has ample attractions to other slightly wayward trials riders. Where else in the world could you double-blip over a 4 meter crocodile and splat up the side of water buffalo?

I have seen some staggeringly good looking country for trials riding, too. The Territory is full of rocks from Uluru down. Now, of course I would not suggest riding on sacred sites, there are plenty of other *big* rocks, steep hills, timber and mud holes to keep the most ardent trialer happy.



One would need to be a bit intrepid, but imagine the delicious fun of finding areas never before trammled by a Michelin trials pattern tyre. Rocks baked in the tropical sun are nice and sticky for riding on; water actually becomes a real hazard as each mud hole hides potential death. Logs can be simultaneously ridden over and knock tested for suitability as didgeridoos. Yes, you might sweat a bit, but this can be a prelude to a quick dip in the nearest billabong (*I'm told Freshwater crocodiles aren't dangerous*). While at the billabong, why not try your hand at catching a barra for the evening's mandatory barbeque?

Really, the Top End is a sportsman's paradise. Why then are there no other trials riders? Are they all out catching barra, now the runoff's in full swing? Are they afraid of a bit of sweat or being knock-tested themselves by a rogue buffalo? Whatever, my friend needs a riding companion soon or he might, shock horror, become an enduro rider.

So if you're the exploring type and like a bit of a challenge please help my friend in the Top End. The Croc Hoppers Trials Club awaits new members.

Why, you may ask did I not at least temporarily assist my friend and get out and ride with him instead of just chewing the fat? Well...ur...ahem... the tropical climate seems to bring me out in a rash that can only be cured regular full body immersion in clear chlorinated water and remedial juniper berry elixir and quinine tonic.