

Trials Tales

Tanna

Now we all have to take holidays and for me as much as anyone this should mean time off work and also trials, which can be a bit all consuming at times. My wife decided on the island of Tanna in the Vanuatu group (you can imagine I went kicking and screaming as it was Oz titles time).

I have always thought that tropical islands and trials don't mix; too flat and sandy, coconut logs are all the same diameter, etc. The salt air is not good for bikes either; the rust reducing motorbikes to pushbikes in short order.

So here was my chance to fully rewind and forget about work and Trials and enjoy the balmy weather, golden sunsets and the all-you-can-eat seafood buffets.

However, once a Trials tragic always a Trials tragic: There are probably no places on earth that allow escape from this disease, except maybe underwater. Trying to force away thoughts of trials is nay on impossible, even in the most unlikely places.

You see Tanna is a different sort of tropical island. Tanna is known for its active volcano. This volcano is plonked right there on one side of the island and you can walk right up to the rim and chuck rocks in for fun. Following the trajectory of your chucked rock you can watch it being consumed in a vast cauldron of molten lava. What makes any visit to the volcano just that little more exciting is that the volcano chucks rocks back at you. Always just off the boil or completely molten, they are mostly little rocks, but ever so slightly unnerving, sometimes Volkswagen-sized chunks. Masses of volcano thrown rocks or lava bombs as they are rightly called, are piled all around the so-called "viewing area"!

I know you're now thinking what the heck has this got to do with Trials? Or is it another boring travelogue by some berk gloating about his exotic island experience?

Well, standing there on the rim of the volcano I kind of got to thinking.

Imagine this: You live in a glorious tropical paradise. You fire up your bike of a morning, whereupon you ride to the rim of the volcano and laid out before you is an ever-changing feast of trials riding. Those Volkswagen-sized rocks are perfect for riding over and every morning there is a new set of obstacles to enjoy. Cooling lava is wonderfully grippy, still warm enough to keep the tyres sticky. Get sick of one rock section? Wait two days and you'll have a new one.

So I think I've possibly worked out the perfect life: Trials on the volcano in the cool of the morning followed by the seafood buffet for the rest of the day.

But, then there's the fire retardant riding suit you'd have to wear, and it is a tropical climate. Oh, and yes, you would need a triple-layered Kevlar blast impact resistant helmet with a 3000° rating, bringing your riding kit to 36 kilos. Could also be embarrassing to stick your bike permanently in the bonnet of an insufficiently cooled "Volkswagen". Add to that, I might have heard somewhere that volcanic ash is carcinogenic...

On second thoughts, a strong and fruity drink inside a coconut shell sipped in the shade of a beach umbrella and some distance from this terrifying bloody volcano might be just what I need!

