Queensland & Northern Territory: Ride the track less travelled through an ancient landscape from one iconic sight to the next.

“Ok guys, it’s official: best holidays ever, you’re my No.one - Bianca, Reef to the Red Centre
Tropical North Queensland with its Great Barrier Reef, the vastness of the seemingly endless Savannah to the dusty expanses of the “Red Centre” is what this incredible ride is all about. We really do take the track less travelled as we ride this incredibly diverse landscape and experience some truly remote and silent vistas, this journey is for those wanting to experience the real Australia behind the big-name icons.

Joining Day: Cairns
Your Cairns airport transfer will take you directly to our joining hotel, ready for an early start tomorrow. Today you will meet your crew for your tour briefing and welcome dinner.

Day One: Undara Lava Tubes
Leaving the Coral Sea behind we ride the twisties of the Gilles Range as we ascend onto the Atherton Tablelands via the dirt tracks around Lake Tinaroo. We cross the Herberton Range and ride onto the geological phenomenon of the Undara Lava Tubes, the world’s longest lava tubes.

Days Two & Three: Cobold Gorge
After a guided tour of the extraordinary lava tubes we continue on and cross the remote, rarely visited Rope Walk Ranges onto the spectacular Cobold Gorge. We spend two nights here allowing us to spend 3 hours cruising this stunning gorge and relaxing in this wonderful Gulf Savannah location or perhaps explore the nearby Robinhood Station.

Day Four: Karumba
Another remote riding day as we cross through a vast empty landscape known as the Gulf Savannah. Today’s ride is a mixture of dirt and paved roads before we arrive at the prawning capital of Australia, Karumba, on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria in time to watch a spectacular sunset from the pub next door to our hotel. It’s a wonderful way to end a great days riding.

Day Five: Gregory River
Leaving Karumba behind we hit the dirt after Normanton stopping en-route at Camp 119 where explorers Burke & Wills carved their famous “dig Tree”. The ride continues on more dirt from bore (waterholes) to bore through a landscape of termite mounds and golden Savannah. We round the day off with our first “Bush Camp” beside the beautiful Gregory River, real Australia!!!
Day Six: Lawn Hill
Heading off road again we take a wonderful remote 2 lane track through red termite mounds and sparse bushland. We cross the Gregory River lined with palms and ferns on our way to the UNESCO listed Riversleigh Fossil site. The afternoon is spent canoeing at the incredibly spectacular Lawn Hill Gorge a short ride to our overnight camp at the wonderful Adel’s Grove.

Day Seven: Mt Isa
We ride south today, initially on dirt, through a sparse golden landscape of spinifex and ancient escarpments. This is cattle country and the landscape is dotted with Brahms and the only vehicles are the giant roadtrains, synonymous with the outback. Tonight’s destination is the “rough and ready” cowboy city known as “the Isa”, where we have a chance to visit the extraordinary “Hard Times Mine”.

Day Eight: Boulia
Leaving “the Isa” behind we enter “Channel Country”, named for the myriad of channels crisscrossing the landscape and a tough remote sparsely populated south-western corner of Queensland. Boulia is renowned for the mysterious Min Min lights; some say a supernatural light that hovers a metre above the ground some nights? A visit to the Min Min Encounter is a must.
Day Nine: Tobermorey
The ride veers west today as we hit the dirt of the legendary outback highway known as the Donahue Highway. The track travels through a sparse landscape dotted with giant termite mounds and crosses into the Northern Territory, (NT) before our overnight camp at the 6000 sq. km Tobermorey Station, located on the edge of the epic Simpson Desert, a real slice of Australiana!

Day Ten: Jervois Homestead
A day on the dirt as you cross the seemingly endless grass plains and termite mounds of this epic landscape, passing landmarks such as Heartbreak Bore & Cockatoo Waterhole. Our overnight camp is again at a working station, this time at Jervois Homestead, spectacularly situated in the shadow of the ancient Jervois Ranges.

Day Eleven: Alice Springs
After a number of days riding across an impossibly vast & open “big sky” landscape we will be surprised to see the Harts Mountain Range loom into view. It isn’t long before we hit the pavement and reach Alice Springs for a good earned beverage and to wash off the layers of dust and celebrate what has been a rarely travelled route from the coast into the vast “Aussie” interior.

Departure Day: Spend some time visiting the many sights in and around Alice Springs, take a flight to Uluru or fly home, the choice is yours.
Ride Grade: 4

Grade 4 doesn’t mean we are climbing cliff faces and forwarding raging torrents, it means we spend considerable time on dirt roads as opposed to paved roads, these same tracks are used by 2-wheel drive cars and roadtrains, so NOT extreme.

70% of this ride is on pavement; some sections of pavement can be potholed, narrow and be not much more than a series of potholes connected by a thin ribbon of asphalt. Some roads have tall shoulders and massive potholes and are VERY remote. Riders must be prepared for wandering stock and erratic Kangaroos and the world’s biggest trucks.

30% of this ride will be on dirt. The vast majority of dirt is hard packed and is used by heavy transport, so not technical or difficult however there are sections that can have loose gravel, washouts and can be rutted especially where roadwork’s are being undertaken or experienced recent rains, generally these sections don’t last for long. Some sections are prone to “bulldust” holes, (super fine dust that covers a pothole) and some sections we will experience some sand although very little. Australian tracks are notoriously changeable depending on how many 140 tonne roadtrains have been over them recently and of course any recent rains.

Distances
The biggest riding day is 480 km / 300 m with the shortest being 125 km / 80mi. Most riding days we average around 350 – 450 km / 230 – 280 mi with numerous rest days included where the bike is available for more riding if desired (subject to any maintenance requirements). The total distance is approximately 3140 km / 1950 mi.

Bikes
We operate 2 brands of bikes that need no introduction, both BMW & Suzuki. Our fleet consists of the BMW F700 (including low suspension) / F800 & R1200 GS and the DR 650. All bikes come equipped with crash protection and are maintained by us, as we own the bikes ensuring peace of mind and reliable riding.

Experience required
Some off-road riding experience is preferred for this tour mainly due to the fact that we do cover significant distance off road other than anything being too technical or difficult. Limited sections of bulldust and sand sections can be encountered. Although not a requirement Compass Expeditions does recommend an off-road training course that gives riders of all levels the tools to tackle off road riding. Contact us for more information on training events and recommended schools.

All riders must have a valid motorcycle license.

Weather
It is winter in Northern Australia, so we can expect some beautiful sunny ride days. Average daily temperatures are around 20 to 30 degrees C (68 and 86 degrees F) and some humidity should be expected on the coastline and as we cross the Savannah. As we head south the temperatures will become slightly cooler to very cold in the evenings. Little to no rainfall should be expected except perhaps brief showers on the Queensland coastline.
Meals

The food options on the Reef to Red Centre are as varied as the landscapes, all types of western style meals are available as well as some local delicacies such as kangaroo steaks and camel sausages. Seafood is in abundance, as is beefsteaks, this is cattle and Barramundi country! On all ride days we include our legendary picnic lunches that we prepare out of our mobile kitchen, not pre-prepared sandwiches left festering in your top box all day. Our picnic lunches are wholesome and filling and our selected restaurants offer excellent food that we have used many times before. Of course all breakfasts are included.

Breakfasts: 12
Lunches: 10
Dinners: 7

Accommodation

Our hotels are generally 3 & 4 stars and range from remote homesteads to resort style accommodations. They are chosen for their location, cleanliness, suitability for motorcycle groups and ambience. On a couple of occasions, we shall be camping where no other facility exists. Some hotels have restaurants & bars attached. Accommodation is an important part of your ride experience and after many years of running tours in Australia we believe we offer a superb mix of excellent boutique hotels and camping sites.

Accommodation: 12 nights

Tour Inclusions

- Airport Transfers
- Motorcycle rental as per your selection
- Fuel if riding Compass bike
- All Accommodation
- All meals as per itinerary
- Support vehicle with passenger carrying ability
- Services of ride leader and support vehicle driver
- Pre-departure material and route maps
- Access to satellite phone, pay per minute
- Compass Expeditions polo shirt
- Entrances to all national parks mentioned in the itinerary
- Cobold Gorge tour
- Hard times mine tour
- Canoeing in Lawn Hill National Park
Riding equipment

You will need to bring the following riding gear:

Riding jacket and pants: Although famously hot, Australia can be cold even in the middle of the continent and some rain could be experienced therefore a multi-layer jacket / pants are essential. The jacket / pants need to have internal removable liners, for when it heats up, and have Kevlar crash protection and a waterproof pocket for your documents and small camera. Ideally your jacket / pants should be 100% waterproof or carry a set of waterpoofs in your day bag.

Helmet: Your helmet should be full faced and of a good quality. Ensure you have a spare visor or replace before departing if scratched. Motocross style helmets are unsuitable for long distance rides, on what may be sometimes dusty surfaces, as you will experience considerable dust ingress. Internal drop-down tinted visors are great, but not so if you need prescription sunglasses.

Boots: Ideally, motocross style boots would be best, but bulky and impractical to carry. When choosing a boot, it is essential to choose a boot that offers the most rigid ankle protection possible; ankle injuries are the most common injuries we experience. Pack a set of walking boots in your day bag for those off bike excursions.

Gloves: We recommend the use of summer gloves, as the weather will be generally warm.

Additional items: Silk neck warmer, great for keeping the wind out. Earplugs, great for keeping the noise out.

Travel insurance

It is compulsory for our overseas guests, and highly advisable for our Australian guests, to have travel insurance to tour with us. It just makes sense! Your insurance must cover you for any incident you may have whilst riding a motorcycle 700 cc. We have negotiated a 10% discount with various insurance providers around the world, who WILL offer coverage for you, for the activity of riding a motorcycle 700cc and over in foreign lands. For more information return to the “tour page” and click on the “insurance” tab.

Passport & Visas

If travelling from overseas your passport will need to be valid for at least six months AFTER completion of your ride. Your passport should have at least one full page available for Australia although most airports simply scan your passport, no stamp. Most nationalities DO require a visa for Australia and these are available electronically by way of an E-Visa available at https://www.eta.immi.gov.au/ETAS3/etas it is the participant’s responsibility to ensure they have any visas that may be required. If your ineligible for an E-Visa Compass Expeditions has teamed up with the world leaders in visa procurement, CIBT, who have created a special Compass Expeditions visa application page with offices in Australia, USA, Canada, UK, Mexico, Brazil, Singapore and numerous European countries. Tours participants can obtain their Australian visa, (if needed), themselves, however for a small charge CIBT can obtain your visa and negotiate any issues that might arise.

Canada: http://www.cibtvisas.ca/compass
USA: http://www.cibtvisas.com/compassexp
France: http://www.cibtvisas.fr/compassexp
UK: http://cibtvisas.co.uk/compassexp
Vaccinations

No vaccinations are mandatory for travel within Australia however it would be wise to ensure you have your tetanus jab at least and have plenty of insect repellent. We recommend that you speak with your doctor and/or check out the World Health Organization website at www.who.int/country and have a look at their excellent International Travel and Health book, available online. In Australia visit the Australian Medical Centre website at www.traveldocor.com.au or phone 1300 65 88 44. For our U.S clients visit www.cdc.gov/travel/ and for our U.K clients go to www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/ for travel health recommendations in general go to www.mdtravelhealth.com now part of red travel www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/, for travel health recommendations in general, go to www.mdtravelhealth.com, now part of red travel.

You’ve made a booking, what happens next?

Once a booking has been made, you will receive an automated booking confirmation. Soon after, you will receive a “welcome” email, and then receive our comprehensive pre-departure booklet in the post. This booklet will prepare you for your adventure and has more details on what to bring and what to expect. We email a “tour dossier” 90 days before departure; this dossier is full of information, including historical and country information. The more you read, the more you will get out of your ride.
Thanks for spending your time reading this information kit. We hope it has inspired you to challenge yourself, if not riding with us then just riding and enjoying this remarkable world that we live in.

If you have further questions, please contact us.

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