



*Rider and Support Crew  
Information Pack*





## WARNING:

The Simpson Desert Bike Challenge is an extreme sports event and aptly rated as one of the toughest mountain bike events in the world.

The five day event is only part of the journey. This event requires considerable preparation and cost. General costs are about \$3000 - \$4000 per vehicle (crew & rider) plus the cost of the bike, bike gear and clothing. For most people, it is three hard days drive to the start line and two days drive home. Outback roads can be extremely rough and you must plan to allow plenty of time for travelling.

Temperatures can vary from 0°C in the morning to 45°C in the middle of the day. Track conditions can be extremely harsh, often very sandy and will require considerable effort to ride. Once you have seen the course you will understand why achieving a 100% finish is such a major achievement, especially considering that in a typical year about 1 in 10 riders will complete the entire course.

This event is a challenge for support crews and officials as well. Crews will need to be fit and well organised to cope in the extreme conditions. They must be prepared to be up and going by 4:30am and able to cope under pressure. They need to be aware that the riders are often unable to assist with camp duties due to fatigue.

**You must also carry sufficient water to last the whole trip (at least 100lts per rider and 70lts for each crew member). There are no reliable supplies at Oodnadatta or Mt Dare.**

**You must carry enough fuel to make the 900km trip from Oodnadatta to Birdsville or 750km from Mt Dare to Birdsville (allow 20% extra to compensate for the extra weight in the vehicle and rugged sand terrain). Do not skimp on either water or fuel.**

Whilst it helps if your crew has four wheel driving experience, it is not essential. All support vehicles must travel in the front or rear convoy and there is sufficient experience drivers to get you out of trouble, if required.

Anyone with pre-existing medical condition should consult their doctor before agreeing to take part. All riders must complete a pre-race medical exam before they enter.

Age limits apply: Riders must be at least 18 years of age. Support crew must be at least 15 years of age (unless prior consent is obtained from the race director).

Because we are travelling in a national park we are required to enforce a limit of 40 riders per event.

Good Luck!



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## Entries

### Individual Entry

Rider entries are individual. Their aim is to complete 100% of the course in the allocated time.

Individual riders compete for the overall 1<sup>st</sup> place and in age group categories of U30, U40, U50 and 50+.

### Age Limits

The minimum age limit for entry as a rider has been set at 18 years of age. Age is determined by the person's age on the 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Support crews members are required to be at least 15 years old. Those under 18 years must travel with a parent or guardian.

### Fitness Level

This is an extremely challenging event which takes a large toll on the rider both physically and mentally. To complete the morning and afternoon stage each day, you will need to be able to ride hard for about 7 to 10 hours.

To ensure the safety of all riders, the committee asks that all riders must have a pre-race medical exam

Many riders enter this event for the challenge, knowing their fitness is questionable but want to share this unique experience regardless.

### Race Rules

The "Race Rules" and "Medical Exam" forms are available on the "downloads" page of the website. All riders and support crews should read these documents before entering the event.

### Safety

Due to the extreme nature of the location, it may be necessary for the event organisers to change the course or stop the event.

The ultimate responsibility for making decisions relating to the operation of the event lies with the Race Director.





## Your Bike

### Bike Selection

Choice of bike is a topic of great debate. It is recommended a mountain bike with good front suspension, a good suspension seat post and 2.1 inch knobby tyres is adequate. If you choose to bring a bike with full suspension, it's better if you can lock out the rear suspension while riding in the sand.

Recent years have seen the introduction of the "fat tyre" bikes into the event. These have an obvious advantage in the sand but are likely to struggle on the hard clay-pans.

It is essential to get used to your bike prior to the event and make sure you're comfortable. This is an endurance event requiring you to spend long periods of time in the saddle.

Make sure you have a comfortable seat. Avoid narrow hard racing seats as these can become very uncomfortable and painful. Also give your bike a full service before the race.



4" fat tyres have an obvious advantage in the sand.

### Bike Preparation

It is essential to give your bike a full service before the race. The following is a list of things you can do to ensure your bike is in good working condition. If you have any questions or concerns, take your bike to a reputable bike store and get them to look at it.

#### Chain, Gears and Derailleurs

Check the chain and chain rings for wear. If the chain does not sit neatly on the chain ring when in top gear, it probably needs replacing. This may also mean replacing the cassette and one or more of the chain rings, otherwise the new chain will skip (jump off the cogs).

If the front or rear derailleur has an excessive amount of play in the pivots and shifting is slow or hard to adjust (even after cleaning or replacing cables and cable sheathing) it may need replacing. Take it to a bike store and have them look at it.

#### Cables, Brakes and Tyres

Check all the cables for excessive friction; do this by removing the cable sheathing from the stops and seeing if they slide easily along the cable. If there is some friction try cleaning by rubbing a dry cloth along the cable. If there is still friction after this, the cable and sheathing will need replacing.

Check the brake pads are hitting the rim squarely (with the front toed in on cantilevers) and not touching the tyre at all. If you have no idea how to adjust brakes, take it to a bike store and watch them. Whilst there, check the pads for wear, and replace if worn.

Also check the tyres for any damage like cuts in the sidewall caused by brakes rubbing on them, or any holes in the tyre that you can see.



## Wheels, Forks and Frame

Spin the wheels around and check for any buckles or broken spokes; check all the spokes for tension (should be roughly the same both sides on front, and more on drive-side of rear). Check for any cracks or dents in the rim. If the wheel doesn't spin freely, or moves from side to side, loosen or tighten the cones, and if it is gritty, check the bearings - they might need cleaning or replacing.

If you have suspension forks, take them apart and regrease. If you don't know how, take it to a bike store, and ask if you can watch; it is a very handy thing to learn. While the forks are apart, check the elastomers or springs.

The last thing to do is clean the frame and check for any cracks at the welds, or any dents or damage of any kind. If you find anything, have it checked out by a reputable bike mechanic.

## Suspension seat posts

An alternative to full-suspension is front suspension with a suspension seat post. Most of the suspension seat posts have between one and three inches of travel and give the rider a bit of comfort without the complexity of full-suspension frames.

There are lots of options out there and price is often a good indicator of quality.



## Tyres

In some respects these are the most important part of the bike as they control how your bike works in different conditions. If you only upgrade one part of your bike, make it the tyres.

The difficulty of course, is choosing which tyres are best suited the conditions encountered in the Simpson Desert.

While the Simpson Desert certainly has sand, it also has a lot of general "hard pack track", corrugations, both soft and hard, some stony sections, and lots of prickles. Choose a relatively lightweight tyre that is classed as having low rolling resistance, and suitable for dry conditions.

Make sure your tyres have a large chunky tread pattern, especially on the sides. When riding in the sand it is recommended to run low tyre pressures around 25psi. This will greatly improve your ability to negotiate the sand.

## Standard verses Tubeless Tyres

Most bikes are fitted with standard rims. There is a vast selection of tyres and they are all easy to change during the race.

The popularity of tubeless wheels (rims) has increased dramatically over the last five years or so. The benefits are many, in that pinch flats are significantly reduced, tyre pressures can be reduced, and generally the tyres seem to roll easier.

Tubeless tyres also work exceptionally well with the introduction of a sealant (green "Slime" being the most common).

Generally, a tubeless set up costs more than the traditional rim and tube system.

If you are going to run tubeless tyre, make sure you must have a CO<sub>2</sub> cylinder to re-inflate the tyres. Also make sure you have practiced changing the tyres.



## Thorn proof tubes.

These do work to some extent, but over the duration of the SDBC, thorns may still work their way through. Thorn proof tubes are also quite heavy and generally not considered as suitable as standard quality tube with a sealant included.

## Tips

For the SDBC in particular, consider carrying a small CO2 gas cartridge (available from bike shops) for quick tyre inflation purposes. Use with caution as they inflate the tyre quickly and are capable of completely blowing the tyre and/or tube apart.

If using a tyre/tube sealant be aware that it is very difficult to get a normal puncture repair patch to stick to the tube if you get a puncture.

Tyre liners are available and come in various styles.

These are designed to fit inside your tyre and add a protective layer that thorns cannot pierce. Many experienced riders will say that they are not particularly suitable for any endurance riding, and particularly not the Simpson Desert!

## Summary

Whatever the choice of tyres, tubes and sealants keep in mind that in many cases punctures or tyre failure will still occur. Good tyres, sealants and the like will assist but always ensure that you take with you spare tubes and a couple of spare tyres.

Some riders change tyres for the last couple of days as the Challenge heads away from the sand and onto the hard and rocky plains approaching Birdsville. If it rains, it is unlikely to make much difference what tyres you have!!





## Spares and Equipment

What you take with you during the race is personal choice. Most riders carry one or two spare tubes, tyre levers and a patch kit.

A good quality pump is essential. Pumps can get shaken off frame mounts so make sure they're securely attached.

A multi-tool with chain breaker is a must have – a number of riders have broken chains.

Some riders also carry a few cable ties for emergency repairs.



## Cycling Gear: (on bike)

- Mountain bike helmet (to Australian standard)
- Sun visor is useful
- Padded cycling gloves
- Cycle shoes (eg Shimano SPD sandals)
- Cycle knicks x 3
- Cycle tops x 3 (long sleeved ex-business shirts can be used if necessary)
- Good quality sunglasses
- Hydration pack and/or bidons (eight bidons are the required minimum)
- Spare tubes
- Tyre levers
- Puncture repair kit
- Pump
- CO2 gas cartridge
- Multi-tool and Chain Breaker
- Cable ties, Pocket knife, Chain lube

## Other Spares: (in Vehicle)

- Arm/leg warmers for cool starts
- Warm jacket and winter gloves for freezing mornings
- Crank-removing tool
- Cluster-removing tool
- Bottom bracket tool
- Spoke tool
- Brake cable and sheath
- Gear cable and sheath
- Spare chain
- Spare tyres (2)
- Spare tubes (6)
- Spare spokes
- Spanners, wrenches, pliers, angle cutters, allen keys etc ?
- Spare jockey wheels
- Spare seat post and seat
- Assorted nuts and bolts





## Vehicles

### Vehicle choice

Only genuine all terrain 4WD vehicles are suitable for the trip across the Desert. Smaller versions such as a Subaru or Toyota Rav 4 are not designed for this sort of travel.

Vehicles must have good ground clearance and adequate room to transport your Crew, food, fuel, water, cloths and bike gear.

The track can be challenging for drivers with deep sand drifts and wash-aways. All vehicles should carry a shovel or spade and if possible, a snatch strap with rated shackles to recover your vehicle if you become stuck in the sand.

Trailers tend to be a big problem and are NOT RECOMMENDED. If you do bring a trailer it must be a genuine off-road trailer with good ground clearance, heavy duty springs and solid construction. You will also need a powerful vehicle to pull the trailer over the dunes and the experience and ability to use it.

### Communications

Each vehicle MUST have a UHF radio for communications within the convoy. If you do not wish to buy a UHF radio for installation in your vehicle, you can buy a hand held system with two handsets (which have a radius of 1.5 km) for around \$150. Make sure it comes with an in-car charger.

Please use your radio and request assistance at any time if you have any concerns regarding your vehicle, convoy procedure or driving technique.

### Vehicle Identification

Entry into the desert is included with the entry fee. Two vehicle decals per vehicle, will be mailed to each team. These are to be placed on the vehicles driver side door and rear window for easy identification of each vehicle during the race.

Each vehicle should have a safety flag on a long pole attached to the vehicle bullbar or roofrack to alert oncoming vehicles of their presence in the National Park.

### Convoy Driving Safety

The speed limit within the National Park is 40 kph. Careering over dunes at high speeds will only destroy your vehicle.

All support crew vehicles must travel in either the front or rear convoys during the race. The Course Marker's vehicle will lead the front convoy and the Sweep Vehicle will lead the rear convoy.

Each convoy will have a number of experienced four wheel drivers. Experienced drivers are happy to help those new to driving over sand dunes and can accompany you in your vehicle if required.

When travelling over the dunes in convoy, the procedure is to wait at the base of the dune for the vehicle in front to clear the dune and call you over. Once clear of the dune each vehicle waits in a safe position for the next vehicle to make it safely over before proceeding. If a vehicle becomes bogged and needs assistance, there will be vehicles both in front and behind able to help.



## Shade

People continually underestimate the importance of shade. It is critical to be able to provide shade in the middle of the day, for both riders and crew.

**Warning:** Wind gusts of up to 50 knots are common in the desert. Your shade system must be able to withstand a battering. Not all survive!



Make sure that you have rigid tie down points on your vehicle. It is much easier if you have a roof rack.

One option is to buy two lengths of 20x20mm tube steel the length of your tarp. Tech-screw the long edges of each side of the tarp to metal tubing. Use U-bolt clamps to attach one piece of tubing to the roof rack. Drill holes through the other piece of tubing to accommodate the tent poles.

To pack up, release the poles and roll up the tarp towards the vehicle. Bike stirrup straps are idea for tying the tarp to the vehicle. If mounted under the U-bolts (between the roof rack and steel tubing) they will always be ready for use.



## Vehicle Maintenance

Check oil, water, fuel and tyres daily. If in doubt – ask.

It is recommended to run tyre pressures of 30-35lbs on the gravel roads heading to the desert and on the way home. Gravel roads are very harsh on over inflated tyres. Check your pressures each day. As the temperature increases, so does your tyre pressure. It always pays to have two spare tyres. If you don't want to buy a second spare, it is a good idea to borrow a matching wheel.

Once in the Desert it's recommended that you drop your tyre pressures to 20lbs. If there is a lot of sand and vehicles are getting bogged, you may be expected to drop the pressures even lower. At low speed, Low pressure will not damage your tyres and will greatly improve your chance of getting over the dunes.

## Vehicle Items:

### Compulsory:

- UHF radio
- Spare tyres (x2) (or repair equipment)
- Lift jack and tyre lever
- Tools
- Tyre pressure gauge
- Spade or shovel
- Fuel, sufficient for (minimum) 900km trip

### Recommended:

- Snatch Strap and heavy duty shackles
- Warning flag on long pole

### Optional:

- Jerry cans for spare fuel Vehicle
- Air Compressor
- Tyre repair equipment
- Oil and grease.



## Camping Gear

### Packing Lists

#### Camping Gear:

- Tent or swags
- Ground sheet (protection from thorns, sand, insects etc.)
- Pillows and pillow cases
- Mattress – self inflating, airbed, stretcher, etc
- Sleeping bags
- Lantern and/or fluorescent light (to run off vehicle battery system)
  
- Shade tarp
- Poles and ropes
- Long and short heavy duty pegs
- Mallet or hammer

#### Cooking Equipment:

- Camp stove and cookware
- Stove fuel/gas bottle
- Folding table and chairs
- Chopping board and knife
- Wash-up bowl and buckets for laundry and washing
- Cutlery and plates, bowls and mugs, thermos
- Washing up gear
- Tea Towels
- Can opener/corkscrew
- Heavy duty rubbish bags and ties

#### Hygiene Items:

- Laundry powder, length of clothesline and pegs
- Toilet paper
- Spade Matches/lighter
- Torch
- Fly nets
- Sun hats
- Sunscreen

#### Hydration:

- Water bottles for support crews use
- Water, At least 100lts per rider and 70lts for each crew member.

#### Other:

Stackable clear bins are useful to carry food supplies  
Tie-downs and straps are essential to secure the load.

By this stage you've probably realised you're going to need a truck instead of a four wheel drive.





## Support Crew

### Finding a Crew

Rider must have their own support crew. The race is also a fantastic adventure for support crew and a great opportunity to see a part of Australia that not many Australians see. If you have access to a 4WD vehicle then ask around your family and friends.

This crew will be responsible for driving the vehicle, setting up camp, preparing meals and looking after the rider. A good choice would be anyone with an endurance sport background as they will have a good understanding of the fatigue you will be experiencing. Conditions are harsh, so your crew has to be fit, resourceful and able to manage in remote areas with no facilities.

Crew members must be committed to looking after their rider. This is an extremely important role that involves a lot of hard work in trying conditions. Ideally all you should need to focus on is eating and drinking, sleeping, and cycling. Your crew is there to take care of everything else.

Although the race itself is only five days, long, you will need to allow sufficient travel time to get to and from the Desert, so participants, generally allow ten days to two weeks for the event, depending on where you are travelling from. 4WD experience is useful but not essential. There are always experienced off-road drivers out there happy to assist.

It is important to remember that you are participating in an extreme endurance event.

Regardless of your athletic ability or experience every competitor is at risk of exhaustion or dehydration.

Your crew must clearly understand what you expect from them in terms of support and should be able to carry out all tasks without your help.

Crews and riders will need to be up by 4:30am so that they can have breakfast and be packed up, if they are leaving in the front convoy at 5:30am. The race starts at 6:00am and the rear convoy leaves at 7:00am.

If you do not have access to a 4WD vehicle there are a few options:

- 1) Hire of a vehicle. A few riders can get together and hire two vehicles between them which will keep the cost down.
- 2) We do have limited numbers of support crews that are willing to support a rider but it is expected that the rider will help cover their costs, ie, Fuel, Food, Accommodation and vehicle hire, which can amount to around \$2,500 to \$3,000 depending on the starting point. This is negotiable between rider and crew.

If we assist you in finding a crew, we do ask that you officially enter or we may allocate the crew to another entrant.





## Support Crew Duties

Basic support crew responsibilities are as follows:

- Set up tarp for shade at the lunch break and set up the full overnight camp each evening.
- Prepare all meals for the rider(s) and crew.
- Prepare and deliver water bidons to Water Stop vehicle at designated times.
- Organise gear for your rider's arrival – including clean cycling clothes, comfortable clothing and footwear for the rest break, towel, face washer, toiletries, sunhat and fly net.
- Attend to the rider(s) and crew laundry as required.
- Check that the rider(s) have everything they need prior to your departure each morning and afternoon. This might include a spare water bottle, hydration pack filled with water, snacks, spare tubes, tools, sunscreen, and a warm jacket for cold morning starts.
- Provide a comfortable bed for lunch breaks. Such as include a swag, stretcher or sun lounger with adjustable back.
- A massage is always welcomed.
- If you have sufficient water, a private area for a wash is appreciated.
- Check the bike(s) prior to each stage. Make any adjustments in consultation with the rider(s). The chain may need oiling, tyres changed or components adjusted if requested.

All crews and officials are encouraged to be on the finish line to cheer each rider home. You will need to carry your rider's bike back to your campsite (do not wheel the bike as the ground may be littered with thorns). A shower of water from a handheld spray bottle is useful to cool riders down quickly.

Be aware of rider's health and comfort at all times and consult medical officers if necessary.

Be responsible for the vehicle, ensure that equipment is safely and securely packed and monitor the tyre pressure and fuel usage over the race.

Make sure that you discuss and clarify your responsibilities with the rider. There should be no doubt as to who is taking care of each task.

Race conditions are unpredictable and abrupt weather changes or extreme cycling conditions can virtually have the entire field swept, and support crews suddenly have to work extremely hard to hold it all together.

## General Health and Welfare

There is a medical team but their workload should be kept to a minimum. The most common problems are avoidable as long as everyone follows a few simple rules.

### Hydration

Support crews must ensure that they have access to drinking water throughout the day. Riders are not the only ones to succumb to dehydration. In the past support crew have become acutely unwell and required medical assistance due to dehydration.

The crew needs to consume at least five litres of water each day, in addition to any caffeinated or alcoholic drinks. Carry water bottles in the vehicle cab to sip at constantly.

### Sunburn

Remember to reapply sunscreen regularly and wear a sunhat. If you are sensitive to sunburn, long sleeved light weight business shirts are great in the desert.

### Footwear

Wear comfortable shoes for protection against thorns and sharp objects. Sandals or thongs are not recommended.



## Getting there

### Travel tips:

Planning and preparation is the key to arriving at the race start fresh and ready to go. Allow plenty of time so that if things do go wrong you have time to spare.

Purni Bore is about two days drive from Adelaide and Alice Springs, three days from Sydney and Melbourne and four days from Queensland. Although the distances may look short on the map, the tracks are rough and slow going.

The last section from Oodnadatta to Dalhousie Springs (185km) takes about four hours and then another two hours from Dalhousie Springs to Purni Bore (72km). To cross the desert from Birdsville to Purni Bore is not recommended unless you are experienced in desert driving and accompanied by another vehicle. Make sure you allow ample travelling time when planning your trip.

Arriving at Purni Bore with vehicle, bike, bodies and all equipment intact can be an achievement in itself.

There are many tales of crews limping into camp at midnight, after becoming hopelessly bogged, getting lost or having to backtrack for tyre repairs.

Each competitor will receive their pre-race pack by post, prior to the event. This contains your Race Number, Health & Safety information, National Park information and a 'Driving the Desert' info sheet for support crews.

The September newsletter will give details of meeting points en route to Purni Bore. These are generally in Coober Pedy or Oodnadatta for those travelling north from the eastern states, Mount Dare for those from Alice Springs or West Australia and Birdsville for those coming from Queensland.

If at all possible, plan to join the group and travel in convoy.

Please check for up-to-date road and track conditions before leaving home.

Desert Parks Hotline: 1800 816 078

Transport SA Road Conditions: 1300 361 033

Desert Parks Website: [www.parks.sa.gov.au](http://www.parks.sa.gov.au)

Remember, there are no services between Oodnadatta (or Mt Dare) and Birdsville. You must have enough Food, Water and Fuel to get you through the desert.

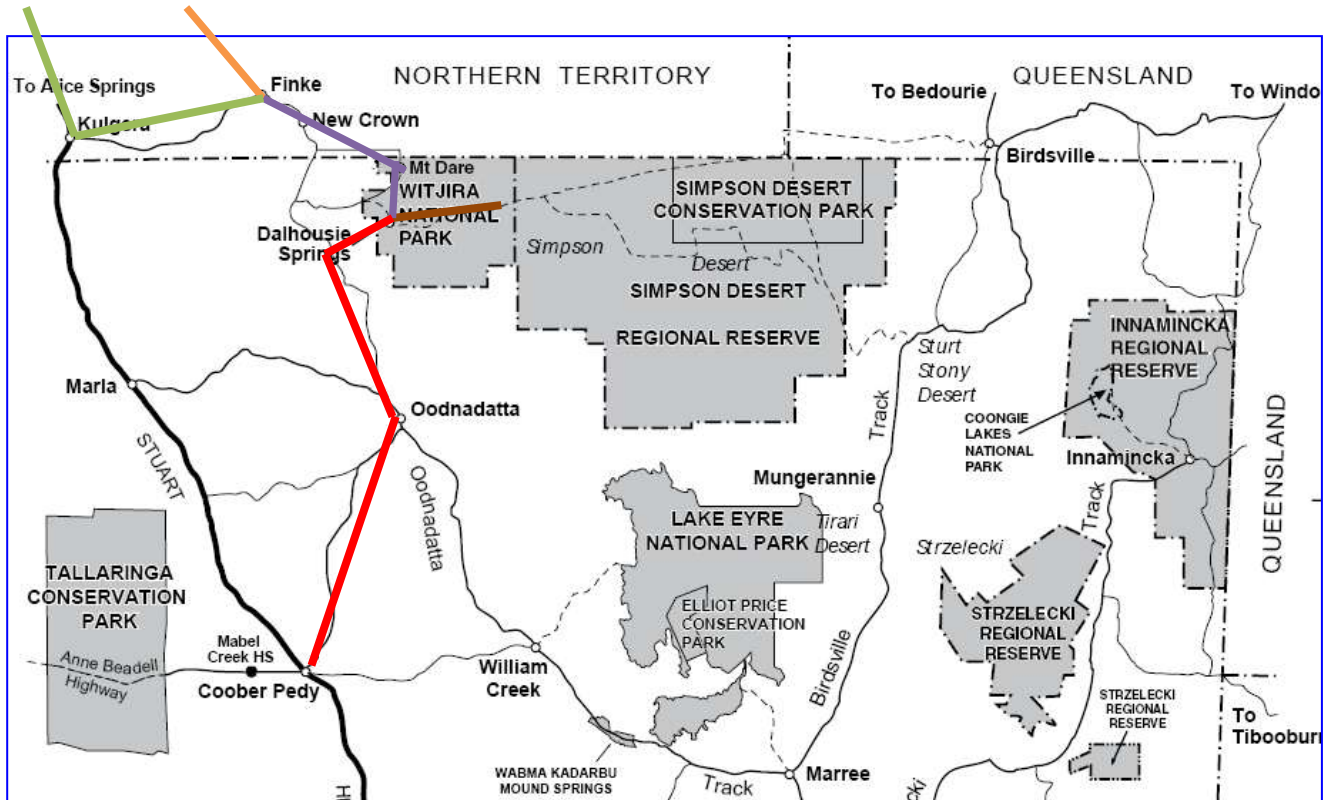
Plan to top up rather than completely fill your fuel tank at Oodnadatta (these are remote areas and fuel costs are much higher) and carry sufficient fuel for at least 900 km. If leaving from Birdsville you will need to carry extra water and fuel for an out and back trip – sufficient for at least 1300 km. If this is not possible you can refuel at Mt Dare.

Drinking Water is available at Coober Pedy and Birdsville. Oodnadatta and Mt Dare have very limited rain water supplies – do not expect to fill up water containers at either. Water containers need to be carried inside the vehicle (not on the roof rack) and tied down securely.

Detours and back tracking can add substantially to your fuel requirements. Carry at least 20 litres spare fuel for contingencies. Remember that strong winds, a heavy load and a roof rack can increase your rate of fuel consumption. Fuel usage also varies depending on vehicle engine size and weight. Allow about 20% more fuel than you would normally expect to use.

Test your UHF radio and make sure it works before heading out to the desert. You will not be able to get it repaired once you leave.

Remember to drop your vehicle tyre pressures once you leave the bitumen road. Drop your speed as well and you may avoid having to stop off at Oodnadatta or Mt Dare to have punctures repaired en route to Purni Bore.



## From the South

### Coober Pedy to Oodnadatta

Distance 195 km – Travel Time about 3 hours.

- 0.0k From the Stuart Highway, Turn right into Hutchison St (Main Street)
- 2.1k Turn left at Seventeen Mile Rd (at caravan park near drive in theatre)
- 2.9k Turn right onto Kempe Rd (to Oodnadatta)

### Oodnadatta to Dalhousie Springs

Distance 185 km – Travel Time about 4 hours.

- Oodnadatta (S27.32.731 E135.26.780)
- 0.0k Head north through Oodnadatta.
- 17.2k Turn Right to Hamilton Station (S27.25.228 E135.21.281)
- 107.5k Hamilton Station on left (S26.42.866 E135.04.912)
- 108.8k Turn Right to Dalhousie Springs Road deteriorates from this point. (S26.42.287 E135.04.719)
- 125.2k Pedirka Siding (go over grid & turn right) (S26.39.482 E135.12.724)
- 142.7k Witjira NP boundary (go through gate) (S26.40.268 E135.21.746)
- 167.6k Dalhousie Ruins (S26.30.831 E135.28.116)
- 185.7k Dalhousie Spring (S26.25.366 E135.30.147)

### Dalhousie Springs to Purni Bore

Distance 72 km – Travel Time about 2.5 hours.

- Continue east past Ranger Station
- 4.5km (approx.) Rubbish Dump (on right hand side). Please dispose of all rubbish prior to entering the desert.
- Follow track to Purni Bore. (S26.17.028 E136.05.862)

(Note: The track has been redirected over recent years but well-worn and sign posted)

Dalhousie Springs is a great place for a swim before heading to Purni Bore. Camping available with cold showers but beware of the mosquitoes.

Please ensure that you comply with all National Parks rules. Once you leave Dalhousie Springs you will be required to carry all your rubbish until reaching Birdsville.

Those travelling from Marree to Oodnadatta. Approx. 400 km – Travel Time about 6 hours.

Please drive safely, according to road conditions.



## Travelling from Alice Springs

### Alice Springs to Finke:

300k's about 6hrs.

Not a bad road with some loses sand and corrugations. Beware of oncoming traffic as road is narrow and follows a lot of the Old Ghan rail with 1000's of old rail spikes, good for tyres.

Often you won't see another vehicle but you never know. Follows a lot of the Finke Desert race track. Lots to see with places of interest.

Take the left fork near Maryvale as the right fork goes to Chambers Pillar. It's a better track than the road from Kulgera. There is no fuel till Mt Dare.

Some basic supplies at Maryvale if you want to venture to Chambers Pillar.



### Finke to Mt Dare:

Better road from Finke to Mt Dare, a couple of hours. This, all going on last year of course, so no telling what the road is like now.

Check Explore OZ for road updates.



### Alice to Kulgera:

About 300k's of fine bitumen to Kulgera. 3 Hrs.

### Kulgera to Finke:

150km, About 4.5 hrs. Often bloody rough with a lot of traffic. Very dusty.

Detour to the geographical centre of Australia if you like corrugations (The Old Ghan track is possibly a better option).

### Mt Dare to Dalhousie:

2-3 hrs. Great steaks at Mt Dare. We believe they have put in a detour east of Mt Dare!

Road is narrow and rough in places with lots of gibber but great scenery. First real test of what's ahead for the uninitiated.

The condition of the gravel roads changes greatly throughout the season (depending on weather and when the grader last passed through). For more up-to-date information, go to the Explore Oz website <http://www.exploreoz.com/>

For more information on SA National Parks go to. <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks>



## National Parks

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Please be aware that we are very privileged to be allowed to run this event in the Simpson Desert Conservation Park. Please respect the park and abide by all national park rules.

### Driving

The speed limit in the National Park is 40km/h. When planning your trip, please allow for this. Avoid driving at night. This is extremely dangerous. Travel times indicated in the previous section are fairly accurate.

Stay on the tracks. We do not want any reports of people driving off track. The vegetation is extremely fragile and vehicles have a massive impact.

**Under no circumstances are any people allowed to consume alcohol whilst driving.**

### Water

There are no water supplies suitable for human consumption. You must bring in all the water you will need for the trip across the desert. We recommend at least 100lt per rider and an additional 70lts for each support crew member, as a minimum.

There is water available from Dalhousie Springs and Purni Bore which is suitable for washing only.

### Rubbish

There is a rubbish dump 4.5km east of Dalhousie Springs and another one entering Birdsville. During your time in the desert, you are expected to transport all your rubbish.

Before leaving home, try to remove all excess packaging from your food and supplies. This will greatly reduce the amount of rubbish you will need to carry.

**Cigarette butts are not to be thrown on the ground.**

If you're a smoker, make sure you have a suitable container to collect your cigarette butts in and place them in your rubbish.

### Camping

We ask that all vehicles stay within 50 metres of the track when setting up at the lunch stops and night camps. 40 vehicles can have a massive impact on the environment.

Make sure you secure all material in your camp. The wind can often pick up during the night and blow rubbish all over the camp. Also ensure that your food is packed away. Dingos frequent the track and will often enter the camp in search of any food scraps.

If you are planning to have camp fires at night you will need to bring your own firewood. Do not destroy any of the local vegetation. Even though the trees may be dead they are often home to many animals. You must dig a trench for a fire and ensure it is properly out before leaving in the morning.

Please keep noise to a minimum at night. The desert is extremely quiet at night and your voice will travel for hundreds of meter, even at a whisper.

In the morning, we ask that you do not get up and start moving around before 4:15am. You will wake the entire camp.

We do not encourage the use of generators. However if you do bring one, we will insist that it is turned off by 8pm at night. People need to get their sleep.

### Toilet facilities

There are toilets at Dalhousie Springs and Purni Bore. There are no other toilet facilities during the event.

Make sure that you have a spade to dig a suitable hole. Once you have finished, either collect your toilet paper in a plastic bag and throw it in your rubbish or burn and bury it. The Dingos will come along and dig up the paper if it is not burnt and there is nothing more annoying than seeing toilet paper blowing around the desert.



## Event Operation

### Registration

All participants must be at Purni Bore on the Monday prior to the race start. It is recommended that you arrive at Purni Bore either on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning to allow yourselves time to acclimatise, to check and adjust your bike and to repack your vehicle after the trip up.

- Registration will be held between 12pm and 4pm Monday.
- Everyone must register
- MTBA forms must be completed and handed in at registration.

### Pre-Race Briefing

A Pre-Race Briefing for all riders, support crew and officials is held at 5pm Monday. Attendance at this briefing is compulsory.

Important information and rules relating to the operation of the event will be explained and questions are welcome.



### Placings/Timing

Riders are timed over each stage for overall results and placings. Riders crossing the line in a bunch will be given the same time. If swept, your distance is recorded and you are timed at 5 minutes for every kilometre ridden. The final placings will be determined by the competitors distance ridden then fastest time.

### Track Marking

5km markers are placed alongside the track for each stage. Track intersections are clearly signposted. Riders, if you leave the track to seek shade or for a toilet stop, please leave your bike in the side of the track to alert officials that you are nearby.



### Daily Routine

4:30am Siren sounds – riders up and fed  
5:25am Front convoy assembles for departure  
5:30am Front convoy departs for lunch stop  
6:00am Race starts  
7:00am Rear convoy departs behind Sweep Vehicle  
12:30pm Approx. cut off time for morning stage

1:25pm Front convoy assembles for departure  
1:30pm Front convoy departs for night stop  
2:00pm Race restarts  
3:00pm Rear convoy departs behind Sweep Vehicle  
6:00pm Approx. cut off time for afternoon stage

7:30pm Briefing



## The Sweep

The objective of the race is to complete 100% of the course. The minimum speed requirement is an average 12 km/hr. Riders who fall behind will be caught by the pursuing Sweep Vehicle and picked up for transportation to the finish of the stage. A penalty is applied and the rider is free to start the next stage.

The Sweep allows riders a one hour lead before departing camp but will be up to the 12.0 km/hr average by the 20km mark.

### Morning Stage

Time Min.	Distance
7:00 am	12.0 km
8:00 am	24.0 km
9:00 am	36.0 km
10:00 am	48.0 km
11:00 am	60.0 km
12:00 pm	72.0 km
12:40 pm	80.0 km

### Afternoon Stage

Time Min.	Distance
3:00 pm	12.0 km
4:00 pm	24.0 km
5:00 pm	36.0 km
6:00 pm	48.0 km

If there is no-one travelling at sweep speed, the sweep vehicle will move up to the last rider.

If the rider wishes to be swept, stop and get off your bike. The sweep will come forward and check on you.

Do not move your bike from the sides of the track. (This is the only way we know where you are).

Do not go more than 20 meters from the track during the race

## Weigh-In

Riders are weighed at the start and finish of each stage to monitor dehydration. All riders are to report to the medical officer at the start line and be weighed at least 15 minutes before the stage starts.

Any rider who decides to withdraw from a stage must notify the medical officer (weighing in the riders) at least 15 minutes before the stage starts.

The riders will also be asked to weigh in at the end of the stage so we can assess their weight loss (fluid control). A weight loss of one kilogram indicates fluid loss of one litre. If a rider loses too much weight, the medical crew may request that the rider is withdrawn from the next stage.





## Medical Support

The medical team will be travelling through the field and stopping at the water stops. If you are in trouble, stop and wait for assistance or stay at one of the water stops and wait for the rear convoy.

## Water Stops

All water bottles and hydration packs must be clearly labelled with the rider's number. Ensure that the number cannot be rubbed off or removed.

Support Crews must prepare their riders' water bottles and have them delivered to the designated drop-off point by 7:30pm for the next morning stage and 1pm for the afternoon stage.

The water-stops will check that your bottles are in. If a rider does not have their bottles in they will not be allowed to start the stage.

Water stops will be located at 20km, 40km and 60km in the morning stages and at 15km, 30km and 40km in the afternoon stages unless told otherwise.

Riders **MUST** stop and give officials their name and rider number at every water stop. Water-Stop/Medical crews at each Water-Stop will record the time each rider passed through the check point. Riders should make sure they are sighted and ticked off prior to leaving the water stop. Failure to stop will incur a 10km distance penalty. Please be patient and polite to the water-stop crews.

The fresh bidons and/or water containers prepared by your support crew will be ready for you to collect. Empty bidons/water containers are left with the Water Stop crew.

NOTE: A 4th water-stop may be deployed in extreme weather conditions (at the Race Director's discretion).

## Additional Rider Food

The water-stops priority is to have water available for the riders. It is recommended that riders also carry additional food supplies to eat whilst riding the bike. The water-stop vehicles are unlikely to have enough space to carry additional food supplies for the riders as well.

If a rider wants to have food supplies dropped at a water-stop, they will have to make arrangements with one of the crews in the forward convoy, to drop the food off. Please ensure that the food is in a bag and clearly labelled with the riders number.





## On Track Support

Riders are actively encouraged to help each other, however no support vehicles are permitted to drive along the track while the race is in progress. Support crews must travel in either the front or rear convoys. To make sure that all of the vehicles make it across the desert.

The only vehicles allowed on the track during the race are the race officials. Official vehicles will wait until it is safe to pass you. At some times there may be other tourist vehicles on the track who are not involved in the event. If possible, we will ask them to wait for, or give way to, the riders.

There is limited shade on the track and you may be out there for up to 60 minutes before someone will find you. If you're feeling unwell, stop at the next water stop.

If a rider leaves the track during a stage, they must leave their bike directly beside the track in clear sight of all vehicles. If a bike is located on the side of the track, the Sweep vehicle will not proceed until the rider is located.

The Sweep vehicle will ensure all riders that have been "Swept" are collected by a vehicle in the rear convoy. Sweep vehicle following the last placed rider will not pass through a Water-Stop until all riders have been accounted for.



## Support Crews – Front & Rear Convoys

Riders are encouraged to pair up so that their support crews can work together. One vehicle and crew can join the front convoy, driving ahead of the riders to prepare shade, meals and assistance for the riders as they finish. The second crew will then remain behind to look after the riders until the race begins and is also available to pick up riders if they are swept.

This is particularly helpful at the lunch stop when, as shade and chairs are packed away by the crew travelling in the front convoy, riders can move to the vehicle and crew staying behind and remain comfortable until called to the starting line.

Many riders and support crews have taken part in this event a number of times. If you are participating for the first time try to pair up with an experienced rider and crew.

## Driving etiquette

The speed limit within the National Park is 40 kph.

All support crew vehicles must travel in either the front or rear convoys during the race. The Course Marker's vehicle will lead the front convoy and the Sweep Vehicle will lead the rear convoy.

At all times, make sure you know the number of the vehicle in front of yours. If you get bogged or stop for some reason, call out on the radio to avoid having someone tail-end your vehicle.

When leaving in the morning we will be driving into the rising sun. We may need to stop for safety reasons.

When travelling over the dunes in convoy the procedure is to wait at the base of the dune for the vehicle in front to clear the dune and call you over. If they have not called out, get on the radio and contact them to make sure they are clear. If you get stuck, call out on the radio for assistance

If part of the convoy gets stuck and a rider passes them, they must remain in that place until the sweep arrives.

**NO COWBOYS.** Anyone endangering other drivers will be warned and may be asked to leave the event.



## Daily Routine

### 4:30am

Awake and get your rider up and moving (this will get more difficult as the race goes on). It is important that riders start to eat and drink as early as possible and continue to do so up until the race start. You need to be firm but understanding.

Maximum hydration before commencing is essential for the performance and well-being of the rider.

The best food is high carbohydrate, low fat and easily digested, (eg. cereal, tinned fruit, energy bars and powdered drink supplements).

Give the bike a final check over (tyres, chain oiled etc) before moving it to a crew travelling in the rear convoy. Ensure your rider has full water bidons and /or hydration pack and that they have adequate snacks and spares with them.

Toilets are the do-it-yourself variety. Keep a spade with toilet paper and matches handy in a location known to all those in your party. Please burn your paper and bury waste deeply. A torch is useful for early morning visits, both as light for you and to deter others from approaching.

### 5:25am

Vehicle should be fully packed and rider escorted to the crew remaining behind. Make sure you take ALL your rubbish with you and be ready to depart.

### 5:30am

Front convoy departs for the lunch stop. Course Marker places 5 km markers along the track.

If you are travelling as a single vehicle it is advisable to team up with another crew. First-timers may link up with an experienced crew before the race.

Crews working together have one vehicle in the front convoy ready to assist both riders as they arrive at the finish of each stage. The second vehicle looks after the riders once the front convoy departs and is available to transport riders if they are swept. It is more comfortable for riders who have been swept if they can travel with a support crew with food and water on hand, rather than in the Sweep vehicle.

If you are travelling in the front convoy you will reach the lunch stop with plenty of time to prepare for the arrival of the competitors. On Day Two morning, only limited numbers of support crews are permitted to travel in the front convoy due to the difficulty of the stage. All other support crews will travel in the rear convoy behind the Sweep vehicle.

Any riders that arrive at the lunch stop without a support crew present will be assisted by officials.





## Lunch Stop

On arrival the front convoy sets up for the lunch break. Try to position your vehicle to maximise shade and block the wind. Erect your shade tarp and set out tables and chairs and a bed for your rider.

Get out water containers and prepare food as necessary.

Do any dishes from the morning and any laundry. Don't forget to eat and drink yourself. Set up an area for your rider to have a wash (a pop-up shower tent with a small folding stool is ideal). Have a small spray bottle of water and camera ready for your rider's arrival.

Once your rider crosses the line you will need to take their bike and assist them to the scales to be weighed. Then guide them to your camp and get them settled in the shade.

On arrival riders need to cool down, which can be difficult in hot conditions. Have a cool drink ready and spray them lightly with water. In extreme heat wrap a wet towel around them. They should be sitting or lying down and sipping fluid immediately.

They may not feel hungry but you must be firm in getting them to eat and drink. Salty snacks are the most popular.



## 12:45pm

Water Stop officials will call for collection of used water bidons once the Sweep vehicle has arrived. These must be collected, refilled and returned for the afternoon stage by 1:00pm.

\*\* If your rider is unable to start the afternoon stage you must notify the Timekeeper and Water Stop officials before the front convoy departs.

## 1:25pm

Crews travelling in the front convoy must be packed up ready to go and have the riders and bikes moved to the crew staying behind. Assemble on the start line in the convoy.

## 1:30pm

Front convoy departs for the night camp. Timekeeper places 5km markers along the track. This is the hottest part of the day and one of the most difficult aspects of the race for riders – getting back on the bike for a further 50 km with the sun beating down.





## Night Stop

The crew in the front convoy will be responsible for setting up the night camp for their rider and providing a comfortable bed for other riders they are teamed up with.

Greet and attend to your riders as per the lunch stop.

Riders will probably be extremely fatigued and in need of much TLC. An evening meal should be prepared and riders need to eat and drink to maximise their recovery.

Depending on water resources a wash down is beneficial and refreshing. Massage is helpful in reducing muscle soreness and stiffness.

Water bidons must be collected promptly from the Water Stop vehicles on their arrival. These must be cleaned, refilled and returned to Water Stop officials by 7:30pm.

## 7:30pm

At least one member of each crew must attend the nightly briefing. The briefing is an opportunity to catch up on results and events of the day as well as any announcements for the following days.

Various fines and awards are presented as the group unwinds after the day's events.

## 8:00pm

Once your rider is safely tucked up in bed, tidy the camp. It is advisable to prepare as much as possible for the following day. Pack up as much of the camp as you can, check the bike, prepare riders needs for the next day (top up spares and snacks, clean and refill hydration pack, refrigerate drinks if you can).

Finalise any arrangements with other crews and officials as needed. Don't leave food or loose items lying around camp in case of dingos. Make sure tents are well secured and pack away the shade tarp strong winds can blow up overnight.

You may enjoy a little socialising and there are rumours of the odd bottle being popped for medicinal purposes but don't forget it's a 4:30am start again the next day.





## Camping and Meals

### General Camp Setup

#### The golden rule is to keep it simple.

Your crew will need to set up and pack up camp nine times during the race in very limited time. It is important that you bring equipment that is easy to use and fast to assemble. Support crews need to plan to do all these tasks without the riders help.

Allow about 20-30 minutes (setup or pack up time) for the following:

- Tents or swags which are easy to setup and pack up.
- Shade for riders which is able to withstand strong winds. The shade will need to be securely tied to the vehicle and well pegged down.
- Ground sheets.
- Cooking and eating utensils, Chairs.
- Water for cooling/washing riders and/or ride gear.

The faster this can be done the easier your support crews task will be. Practice makes perfect so try out your shade tarp set-up at home.

Any tent that can be assembled by one person in less than five minutes is ideal – leave the multi-roomed family model at home.

If you are a sole support crew person, don't panic – there are always others around to help with shade tarps and so on.

Packing and unpacking your vehicle gets easier once you get rid of your rider and bike at Purni Bore. Keep at least one water container in an easily accessible place.

Lightweight equipment such as personal bags and sleeping gear are best stored up on the roof rack. Use empty food bins to store rubbish bags in and keep up on the roof rack.

Mosquito repellent is essential (particularly if you plan to camp at Dalhousie Hot Springs).

Fly nets can become something of a fashion statement with some riders electing to ride with one draped over their helmet.

### Meals

#### Breakfast

Many support crews travelling in the front convoy forgo the joy of a 4:30am breakfast in favour of a snack in the vehicle en route and a decent feed once they arrive at the lunch stop.

Depending on track conditions the front convoy may arrive as early as 8:30am so there is generally plenty of leisure time. For those in the rear convoy, you have time for a more relaxed breakfast and pack up prior to your departure behind the Sweep vehicle around 7:00am.

#### Lunch

Most will find something to munch on while attending to the riders at the lunch stop. Often this will be something you have lovingly prepared for your rider's benefit, which they have completely rejected.

Keep some fruit bars, lollies, biscuits etc in the passenger cab of your vehicle, along with plenty of water.

#### Dinner

Crews in the front convoy can expect to arrive at the night stop around 3:30 – 4:00pm. Try to get the evening meal prepared and everyone fed before the briefing at 7:30pm; otherwise it can drag on into the night.

The food you prepare is very much a matter of personal taste for both crew and rider. Much is determined by whether you have any refrigeration. If not, go for dried, tinned and long-life options.

#### Generators:

We ask that all generators must be turned off by 8:00 pm. Most people are in bed by this time and it is important that everyone gets a good night's sleep.



## Looking after yourself

### Nutrition

A challenging part of this race is trying to manage your diet when your stomach is constantly heaving and even your favourite foods make you want to throw up. Adequate intake before, during and after each stage is essential for recovery.

What you decide to eat is a very individual choice. Some riders can tuck into meat and three vegetables with relish, while others turn green at the thought. Eating early in the morning is recommended, which gives your digestive system a chance to get to work before you start racing at 6am.

Snack while riding if you can tolerate it. Try the more savoury snacks and avoiding foods with high sugar levels. Power bars and gels tend to get cooked in the heat and can be difficult to stomach.

Potato chips are a perennial favourite on arrival in camp and carry other salty snacks go down well. A variety of snacks to pick at are generally better than one solid meal, particularly at the lunch stop.

Take lots of different options and try them. Some recommendations are:

- Two minute noodles
- Potato chips and Pringles
- Rice cream
- Baked beans or spaghetti
- Biscuits and Cake bars
- Tinned Fruit
- Bread (either toasted or in sandwiches)

Always buy small serving sizes. Spend some time going over your nutritional needs with your support crew and make sure they know what to prepare and how. Crews quite often can survive on the food rejected by their riders. Remember to allow enough food for the whole trip.

Because you will be sweating heavily during the race you will lose large amount of salt from your body. It is extremely important that this is replaced. Salt tablets are a quick way of replacing lost electrolytes.

### Hydration

The Official Crew cannot stress the need to hydrate enough. The Simpson Desert is an extremely arid region with an average humidity of under 20%. Your body needs a considerable amount of fluid just to humidify the air you breathe and that's while you are sitting doing nothing.

Riders are often unable to complete stages of the race due to dehydration. Start by drinking at least one litre of fluid prior to race start at 6am and sip constantly. A hydration pack can make it easier to access fluids when the track is rough. It is a better insulate and will keep your fluids cooler. Monitor your urine output; it's a better indicator of your hydration status than thirst.

Sports drink mixes are good but very hard to absorb during the race. It is recommended that you only use ¼ strength of the indicated amount.

Many riders reach for a cold Coke on the finish line for an instant sugar/caffeine lift. Even if you're not a Coke fan, this is highly recommended. Cold sports drinks also help to replenish depleted electrolytes.

Keep drinking throughout the lunch break and use any weight loss identified as a guide to fluid replacement (i.e. 1 kg lost = 1 litre extra fluid to be replaced).





## Recovery

There is a lot you can do to maximise your recovery between stages. Most of this can be achieved with some pre-planning and discussion with your crew.

- Shade is important. There is no shade except what you bring with you. A good-sized, strong tarp with poles, ropes and heavy duty sand pegs is absolutely essential. The wind will do its utmost to rip tarps apart so make sure it is well secured.
- Some sort of bed at the lunch break is useful. Maybe a swag, stretcher or sun lounger with adjustable back – it is essential to be able to lie down, off the ground, which is often uneven and covered with thorns.
- It helps to have a wash soon after you arrive. Get your crew to rig up an area where you can take a bucket of water, towel, face washer and soap; and freshen up and change into comfy, loose fitting clothes for the rest period. A 'pop-up' style shower tent would be ideal. Solar shower bags may require more water than you'll have available.
- Bring several sets of cycling gear so that you always have a fresh set for the afternoon stage.
- Some crews have been known to bring along such luxuries as a massage table and qualified masseur. The rest of us can only look on in envy and hope to persuade a crew member to give us a rub down at the end of the day.
- If temperatures climb to extreme levels, a wet towel is useful to wrap around you on arrival, to drop your body temperature. Handheld spray bottles of water are good for cooling off.
- Ideally you should consume at least 50 grams of carbohydrate within ten minutes of finishing the stage. A sports drink is a good first option while you cool down and let your stomach settle.
- Your support crew should be able to manage all aspects of the camp so that all you need to do is rest and prepare yourself for the next stage. Keep your crew up to date with how you are going and discuss any changes to your routine or bike set up.

## Sun Smart

Be sun smart. Bring a hat and wear plenty of sun screen. Day time temperatures can often exceed 40°C. Make sure you cover your body whilst out in the sun.

As you sweat during the day, the sunscreen comes off. Please reapply sunscreen regularly. The water-stop vehicles will be carrying additional supplies of sunscreen for the riders, if needed.

## Footwear

The desert is littered with small thorns. Make sure that you have shoes on at all times, even when going to the toilet at night. In the major campsites at Dalhousie Springs and Purni Bore you will often see broken glass on the ground.





## Post-Race Celebrations

### Birdsville

Celebrate and relive the memories over a few drinks at the Birdsville Hotel. Lunch is held at the Hotel followed by race presentations, a final fines sessions and the auction.

The cost of the rider's lunch is included in the entry fee for the race. Usual cost is around \$20-35 for crews and officials.

If you have anything that you or one of your sponsors would like to contribute to the auction, please bring it along.

Most then retire to have a few hours' sleep before the evening meal and celebrations.

### Accommodation:

**Birdsville Hotel** (07) 4656 3244  
Air conditioned rooms in multiple sizes

**Birdsville Caravan Park** (07) 4656 3214  
Cabins and camping (powered and un-powered)

If you're looking for a room, please book early.





## Fund Raising

When you travel to remote areas of Australia you begin to understand the logistical challenges of helping people in need.

We are proud to be associated with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and would greatly appreciate any fundraising activities that would contribute to the support of this essential organisation. 100% of the money raised by riders, through fundraising activities, is donated to the charity.



**ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE**  
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At the race briefings each night we have a fines session just to highlight some of the days more notable activities and humorous moments.

We also ask participants to bring along items that can be auction at the post-race celebrations in Birdsville.

In recent years, many of the riders, crews and officials have donated their photos to create a photographic record of the event. The CD/DVD can be ordered at the end of the race or online.

All profits from the fines sessions, the auction and the sale of the photo CD/DVD also go into the fundraising pool.

(Photos used in this newsletter were selected from the 2008 CD edition).



Further information is available in the website and is constantly being updated.

Look forward to seeing you out there,

Mark Polley  
SDBC Committee  
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(17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2011)