

Namaqualand Daisy Tour – Sept 2010 ... by Lady leader-of-the-pack”

“Life is about taking risks ... “

Michael’s leader cancelled at the last minute & he needed a replacement. He commented to Johan about him going along if only his arm was better. Johan got this smirk on his face & said “well, why not take Zanda – she has leave & knows how to read a GPS” ...

My mind went into overdrive ...

Phew, will I be able to pull this off?

What if I get the guys lost?

Eeek, I will be the only girl with nine other guys?

(ok ok ... I know you guys reading this will probably think ... one guy, nine girls ... problem? What problem?)

Yes, I do have leave!

Yes, I do love a challenge!

Yes, I do want to go ride!

... but I am supposed to be doing house cleaning/gardening – that’s why I put in leave (sad I know)

WHAT are you thinking girl??? ... are you nuts ... this is an opportunity of a lifetime ... remember your motto in life ... “Life is about taking risks, without them you will miss out on opportunities to grow, learn, enjoy, realize, love & experience”

SMS to Michael the next morning ... “If you still need me ... I’m in”! I tried to give him an opportunity to come up with another plan in case he decided he didn’t really want to take a girl along. ☺ Thanx so much for taking a risk too Michael !!!

Our group:

- > **Michael** (DPA) – from Jhb. Tour organizer & initial backup vehicle driver of a Toyota Land Cruiser
- > **Stephen / Steve** – from Scotland on a green KLR 650
- > **Stuart** – from England on a red KLR 650
- > **Donnie** – from Scotland on a silver Transalp 650
- > **Bert** – from Scotland on a blue Transalp 650
- > **Johan / JJ** – from Jhb on a white KTM 990 Adventure
- > **Byron** – from Jhb on an orange KTM 990 Adventure
- > **Kevin** – from Cullinan on an orange KTM 950R
- > **Hardey** (h2/hh) – from Pta on an orange KTM 690 (joined us from day 3)
- > **Zanda** (Puddles) – from Pta. Tour leader on a silver BMW GS650F Twin

Total km for the trip = 3968

Day one & two were about getting as far away from Gauteng as possible, mostly tar.

DAY1: 23 SEPTEMBER 2010 (+- 480km) Destination: near Vryburgh

Pta -> Jhb -> Potch -> Klerksdorp -> Hartbeesfontein -> Ottosdal -> Delareyville -> Schweizer-Reneke -> Vryburgh -> Kameelboom Lodge

Met Michael & the guys at the Sasol Delight on the N12. We had to focus & listen very carefully to our foreign guests at first to understand what they said as they spoke with pretty heavy accents. Everyone was very friendly & full of smiles. I was a bundle of nerves.

Michael had sent us the daily routes for the trip & did mention that it was only a proposed route, not cast in stone. Hubby kindly set it all up on my GPS for me. "Piece of cake ... all you do is select the route for that day & off you go". Ha ha ha ... after day one the route changed & we picked roads as we went along.



Stopped to get a leg stretch & discuss the route. I took them on a bit of a detour via Delareyville to Schweizer-Reneke. Michael just smiled and said "but this is the correct route" 😊



Lunch stop at Mamusa Guest Lodge Pub & Grill in Schweizer-Reneke



Our first Camping spot at Kameelboom Lodge just past Vryburgh



Kameelboom Lodge - paradise within the dry bushveld stunning !!!

Each person would take turns on this trip to buy what they needed & make supper for the group.

We sat around the camp fire & chatted till quite late. When all settled down for the night we realized that sleep would probably be quite limited ... the trucks driving past on the nearby N14 sounded like jet planes taking off. They flew all night long.

DAY 2: 24 SEPTEMBER 2010 (+-520km) Destination: Augrabies

Vryburgh -> Kuruman -> Kathu -> Postmasburgh -> Olifantshoek -> Upington -> Keimoes -> Kakamas -> Augrabies

We decided to push through to Augrabies in two days instead of three as the most fun would only start from there.



Quick stop at Kathu to check out the huge mining equipment. Michael met "Grunt" from the Wild Dog forum there.

Day two I managed to miss the turnoff (following the GPS with serious concentration of course – it did not tell me to turn!!!). We got to the second dirt road as agreed but the signs looked all wrong. I questioned it with JJ who he said his GPS gave the same directions. Michael had told the KTM guys (JJ, Byron & Kevin – all experienced dirt riders) that they must take off on their own if they wanted to ride faster & we would all just meet up again at the next town. So off they went in a cloud of dust.

About 20 minutes later Michael phoned. Where are you?
We're at the second turnoff? Where are you?
I'm at the second turnoff
???

Oh hum – I thought the signs had looked all wrong. Out came the map. I felt so bad. I was getting it wrong again. Stuart laughed & said we are not lost ... we know exactly where we are. We are here, pointing to a point on the map. We picked the shortest route to get back to Michael in Olifantshoek. Not too far down the road ... yahoo ... DIRT up ahead.

I tried to stay well ahead of our guests so that they don't eat too much dust. I was racing along when I peeped at my mirror ... there they were right on my tail. The faster I went the faster they went. The next minute Bert who was second last came blasting up alongside me. I thought oh hell he is trying to catch me because one of the guys had gone down so I stopped. He came to a snaking halt up ahead. Swearing & shaking like crazy. I asked if everything was ok and all I got was "F!@#\$ this is awesome", F!@#\$ I can't believe how f!#\$%ing awesome this is". How the f!@#\$ do you stop on this f!@#\$%ing stuff. He had a HUGE BIG grin on his face & couldn't stop giggling & chattering. He was on the highest of highs I have ever seen. Quick smoke break to calm the nerves then we continued. I

asked them to give a little more space between each other so that they can see what's coming up ahead & not choke on all the dust. We met up with Michael who was waiting for us here at the Watergat in Olifantshoek. I think he was stressing that these chaps might be mad at me for taking them on another detour but all he got was a bunch of dusty, chattering, happy guys that couldn't stop reliving their first dirt experience. Phew ... I was relieved!



Tar till Uppington & then to Augrabies. Our 2nd camping night – lush green grass with lots of peace 'n quiet ... what a pleasure.

I felt exhausted. I didn't realize it took so much out of you having to stay focused all the time & make sure you look out for the other riders. I was always "one of those other riders". I was learning a lot & totally enjoying myself at the same time. Sms to hubby ... "I really miss you & wish you were here".



DAY 3: 25 SEPTEMBER 2010 (+-300?km) Destination: Pella
Augrabies -> Poffadder -> Pella -> camping on the Orange River

Up early, off to see the falls & have breakfast. Today the fun would begin ... plenty of sand/dirt roads.



Sunrise @ Augrabies where we camped



Entrance to Augrabies Falls



We left the bikes at the entrance & all hopped onto the bakkie



We took the dirt road next to the Augrabies National Park – lovely wide road with a couple of sandy patches. The KTM guys raced off ahead & found a lekker sandpit for us to play in.



They played until they were totally exhausted churning up dust, flopping over in the sand, picking up bikes & then doing it all over again with huge big smiles on their faces. Bert almost head-butted the

only pole to be seen. Me thinks target fixation had something to do with it. Confidence levels were up so off we went.

A couple of kms later this corner with a thick sand patch claimed a rider – Bert.



The excitement got the better of Bert & he was way too close to Stuart when he hit this sand patch & it dumped him. He injured his ankle & possibly broke the bash plate of the Transalp with his foot. Thank goodness he was wearing decent mx boots else he would have broken his ankle/shin. Iced it for a while to reduce the swelling.

No more riding for him so he swopped with Michael. This became his mode of transport for the rest of the trip. He named it the “Wackie Backie” & actually became quite attached to it. At least he still had an “African off-road adventure” of a different kind. This backie with backup bike & trailer can fly over jumps & obstacles like you cannot believe 😊. Mmmm ... now I know why he had a helmet with Evel Knievel on it !!!

I must commend Bert - even though injured, he always had a sense of humour. When he spoke I(we) always laughed. Oh yes and he is the only person I know that can use the word F!@#\$\$% many many many times in the same sentence.



The tar was not too far down the road and we then took it all the way to Pella.



The church at the Pella Missionary – we got the whole history from one of the nuns.



Down to the Orange River Resort we went. Oops ... perhaps this was a lush, tropical resort at some stage???

Camping in the wild ... very cool! Bathing in the Orange river ... for brave souls. Peeing in the bush ... it can't get better (well umm, if you're a guy or can stand & pee) 😊

We all woke up the next morning covered in sand/dust inside our tents. Someone's first words "Where the f!@!#\$ did all this sand come from? No no, this time it wasn't Bert 😊

Had great fun getting the bikes & the Wackie Backie outta that sand the next morning.



DAY 4&5: 26&27 SEPTEMBER 2010 (+-324km) Destination: Hondeklipbaai

Pella -> Springbok -> through Namaqua National Park -> towards Koiingnaas -> Hondeklipbaai

Hardey came riding down the road as we were getting out of the sand. How did you know where to find us? He had enquired by the local police station – then again the whole village knew we were down by the river. He had bulleted through from Pretoria to Poffadder the day before. Yislike ... that's one tough guy – he must have the most kms on his bike/bum than anyone I know. Yahooo ... I was relieved, someone to help with the navigation although I was starting to get the hang of it.

The guests really enjoyed Hardey – they saw him as a real genuine guy, no pretences and a wealth of knowledge about his country. They loved to listen to his stories.



Brrrrr freezing cold down to Springbok, 6.5 to 11 degs. Today took us through Namaqua National Park, Wildeperdehoekpas towards Koiingnaas. Not many flowers along the way – only the odd spot of colour here & there. The roads were like gravel highways.



Arrived in Hondeklipbaai (Dog-stone-bay, as JJ would call it) & managed to get tented accommodation at Skilpieskraal – excellent place to stay, highly recommended. I stalled my bike in some sand & zap, it refused to start. Huh, what happened now? It's never done this before? Did the electronics go for a

ball? Hardey listened & immediately said it's the battery. Oh no, I had been riding with my spot lights on the whole time & it had drained the battery too much.

Phoned "BMW on call" hoping that they could bring me a battery. Sorry, they do not keep stock items with them but they can send a technician out to jump start my bike for me. I laughed ... I already have 9 technicians to help me jump start ... all I need is a battery!!! Michael took the battery out of the Transalp & put it into my bike. The KTM (grin factor) came off the Wackie Backie & the Transalp was loaded. Sjoe, luckily I would still be able to ride my bike.



Day 5: REST DAY – to catch up on some washing & enjoy the scenery.

Brrrr ... another chilly & very windy day. I picked up a nasty stomach bug the night before & had already walked a path in the shells from my tent to the bathroom through the early hours of the morning. We

did some washing & then I kept a low profile the rest of the day while the others went off to play in the sand along the coast. Lucky buggers.



DAY 6: 28 SEPTEMBER 2010 (+-400?km) Destination: Cederberg

Hondeklipbaai -> Garies -> Klawer ->Clanwilliam -> Cederberg Wilderness Area

Had a good night's sleep and felt strong again the next morning – must have been the “magic” rice & all the bed rest. To Garies for a wholesome breakfast at Sophia's Guest House then down in the direction of the Cederberg. The roads in the Cederberg had some stoney patches that were like marbles but otherwise the roads were all great. Only one little water crossing on this trip! We camped at Oasis in the middle of the Cederberg. Met a couple on a GS1200Adv from the Cape that were doing a weekend trip. I think he said his name was Henry (forum name also Henry?).



DAY 7: 29 SEPTEMBER 2010 (+-400?km) Destination: Tankwa National Park

Cederberg -> Katbakkies Pas -> Tankwa National Park -> Gannaga Pass -> Gannaga Lodge

Up the lovely winding roads of the Cederberg towards Katbakkies Pas & then onto Tankwa National Park.



Taking a drinks break under the trees – very nice picnic spot, pity it's not maintained.

The road to Tankwa was very hot, dry & dusty, 37.5degs. My bike's fuel pump started to give problems due to the high temperatures. It's like racing along & just closing the throttle without warning then it coasts for a bit & then jerks back into action as the fuel flows again. Filled up with fuel from the Wackie Backie.



Lovely air conditioned offices ... it was a pleasure just hovering inside there for a while as we paid to go into the Park. Up Gannaga Pass ... my bike jerked all the way, even with a full tank. The high temps & altitude didn't seem to agree with it. Quite challenging when you need a constant throttle in places ... but I made it. Bert had some fun getting the Wackie Backie around some of the sharp bends and was very chuffed with himself that he made it to the top without any incidents ☺



We slept over at the Gannaga Lodge at the top of the pass. Hie hie ... being the only girl has its perks (sometimes) ... I was spoiled a second time with a double bed - the most snugly, cosy, cuddly bed I have ever slept in.



DAY 8: 30 SEPTEMBER 2010 (+-328km) Destination: Verneukpan

Gannaga Pass -> Middelpos -> Brandvlei -> Verneukpan

Beautiful sunrise view from my door.



It was fairly cool so my bike gave no hassles at first. Again, lovely open roads all the way with some catchy bends here & there.



Steve's almost & Donnie's corner ...

Steve wizzed past me through the bushes, almost ... agh ... almost ... agh phew he just managed to keep the bike going until he got it under control & stopped. The next minute this "rocket" came around the corner. Braaaaakes, slip, slide ... kaduff. Donnie slid to a halt & was up just as fast as he went down. Too fast for me to get a pic ☺. I ran over to help him pick the bike up & ask if he was ok. Yip, he

was fine. The next minute I broke into song ... "Another one bites the dust " !!! Everyone packed up laughing.

The song thing ... let me explain ... Byron (one of the KTM guys), who has a sense of humour of note used to burst into song every time someone made a comment that triggered a possible song. Believe me that was often. It was hilarious ... Steve wanted ear muffs at times ... not from the singing per say ... more due to the song of choice. Byron's bursting into song landed up rubbing off on a few of us.

Ok .. back to day 8.



Sitting in what little shade we found, playing noughts & crosses in the sand waiting for the Wackie Backie –which landed up with a flat tyre. So we zipped off to the watering hole to wait for them. Poor Bert had to change it all by himself. Michael arrived just in time to see him putting the tools away.

The road to Verneukpan consisted of many gates that had to be opened & closed. The heat went up & my bike was quite challenging to ride at times. Hardey eventually came up with a brilliant plan ... ice that darn fuel pump ... perfect for a couple of kms & then the jerking would start again. What I found helped was to get the speed up to 110+km/h so that when the fuel shut off I still had enough momentum to get me through till the fuel kicked in again. I must have looked like a real idiot from behind ... I flew down some of those roads & bumps at speeds I would never normally be doing with my low bike. Got some battle scars under my bash plate to prove it!





There was a storm heading our way – plenty of lightning & thunder but only rain in the distance. Some of the guys went out for a ride on the pans & on the way back Hardey took a tumble & landed on his face. Broken mirror & slightly bend handlebars which JJ managed to straighten. We were very worried that he had a severe injury but luckily Hardey was his usual humorous self. Between him & Bert they kept us entertained for the night ... the one legged man vs the one eyed man.



DAY 9: 1 OCTOBER 2010 (+-400?km) Destination: Barkley West

Verneukpan ->Kenhardt -> Wegdraai -> Groblershoop -> Griquatown -> Barkly West

Luckily Hardey was ok to ride ... one gate after another, after another, after another as we left Verneukpan. Nothing technical, just watch out for some of the rocks – JJ managed to get a smiley somewhere along the way.



After Kenhardt we experienced some really slippery, rough, sandy, crappy roads. When I muttered to Hardey about the road he just said ... “What a sh*t road” !!!

Soon we were back on the tar. A quick roadside service, KLR needing an air filter clean. Steve’s bike started to splutter but that was just due to a dirty air filter from riding in the dust.



So while they did that ... I did this AGAIN



Landed up at The Pumphouse, on the river, in Barkly West. Their facilities had been trashed so we could not camp there but we were taken to a B&B where some of us camped on the front lawn. A few chose to indulge in a nice comfortable bed. Nooooooooooooo, I was not one of them ... I did the tent thing. It was our last night after all.



From left to right – Donnie, Bert, Michael, Steve, Stuart

We decided to eat out our last night – the food was ordered & collected for us from The Pumphouse. How's that for service ☺ mmmm ... the best Spare Ribs ever.



DAY10: 2 OCTOBER 2010 (+-560km) Destination: Home

Barkly West -> Home

The SA group heading back home via tar. We had one last stretch of dirt. Final thrill for the trip that landed up being some fairly deep stones (next to the railway line kinda stuff).



From left to right: Hardey, JJ, Byron, Kevin, Zanda



Back home safe, sound, dusty AND smiling from ear to ear!!!



Hubby @ work – is he cool or what!!!???

Wow, wow, wow ... what an awesome experience. My motto, she still stands ... take the risk.

To all the guys – thank you for all your help, friendship, words of encouragement, songs & laughs along the way. I truly enjoyed the trip with you.

Oh yes ... girls can ☺ !!!