

# australasian DIRT BIKE

# HUSKY XC500 SWEDISH STEEL

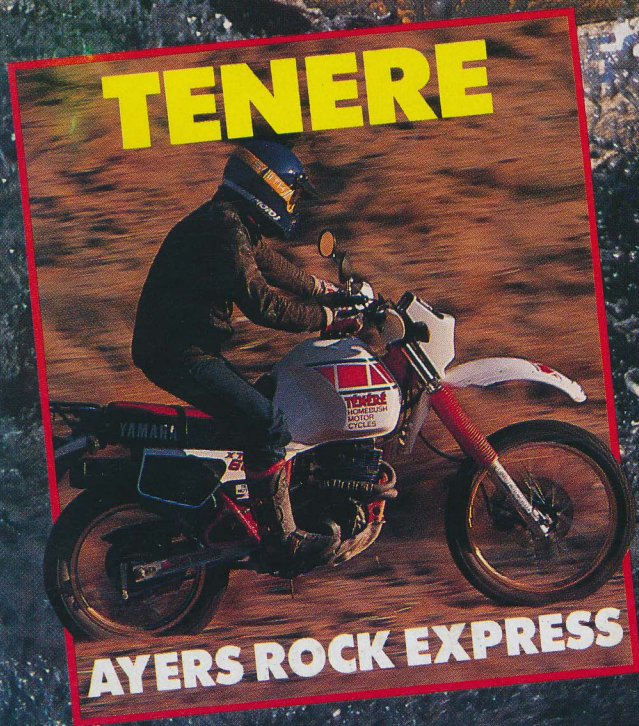
OCTOBER 1983  
\$2.20 (\$2.75 NZ)\*

**OUTBACK DIRT  
BIKE SAFARIS  
SEE AUSTRALIA FIRST**

**THE CHANGING FACE  
OF ENDUROS**

**JENNY MILLER  
VERY FAST, VERY NICE**

**JOHN HAND  
OUR BEST  
ENDURO RIDER?**

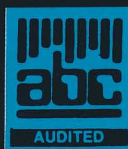


## TENERE

**AYERS ROCK EXPRESS**



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ISSUE 54  
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## COVER

Husqvarna's XC500 is no pussycat, but there are plenty of people around who demand huge gobs of raw power to terrify themselves with each Sunday, before they head back to work in the bank on Monday morning.

## INSET

Yamaha's XT600 is called after an African desert — the Tenere — found in the famous Paris-Dakar rally. How does it fit into Australia? Quite nicely, thank you.

\*Recommended and maximum retail price. You're getting off light. You should see what we have to pay Honest Muz to keep away from the office.





# YAMAHA XT600 TENERE

## Marketing magic: Ayers Rock cafe racer

*Forget the Paris-Dakar Rally. For Australians, this bike represents the round Australia brigade's wildest dream — to get hold of a bike that not only covers exhausting long road distances, but which can safely and comfortably get you into places like Etadunna on the Birdsville Track, or Sandfire Flat Roadhouse just south of Broome in West Australia, or even to the tip of Cape York non stop from Cairns. Oh, yes . . . and forget doing any enduros.*

**T**here's only one relevant question to be asked of the Tenere: how many buyers will actually ride around Australia, or even complete 500 kilometre jaunts into the desert?

And there's only one obvious answer: who cares?

The Tenere is such an obvious statement of intent that once you've bought it and made the statement, that's really all you have to do. The image of the bike does the rest. We've never, ever had a test bike which created so much interest and it didn't even seem to be only motorcyclists who would wander over and casually ask:

"How's she go, mate?"

Car drivers, truck drivers, service station attendants, passersby. The Tenere was enough to get them all interested.

Road riders have had what they call cafe racers for years. You know, bikes which look like Bathurst specials but which are all only skin deep. Bikes you park outside cafes and allow passersby to admire, hence the name. The Tenere is the dirt biker's cafe racer.

### ROAD OR DIRT?

At first glance, the Tenere looks like a TT600 with a big fuel tank and a two-tone seat, but when you look closely it's nothing like the TT (see sidebar).

The main personality created by

all the different parts puts the Tenere fair square into the dual purpose category, as the designation XT would suggest. XT Yamahas in the past were all street/trail, and this one is no different. The TT is for really serious dirt riders who want the pleasure of riding only a four-stroke, while the repainted XT550 is the poor man's substitute.

And while the Tenere will not appeal to all four-stroke buyers it will appeal to those who in the past have had to satisfy themselves with XT550s or XL500s or DR500s fitted with big fat plastic accessory tanks. A compromise of a compromise bike, if you like. What the Tenere did was start from scratch with the long distance road/dirt hauler concept and design in all the necessary equipment so that it all worked together.

From this viewpoint, then, the Tenere is meant for both road and off road situations, which sounds like you're stating the obvious. But we feel it's necessary to get this straight: the Tenere's looks are going to fool some people, and rumours of the fine dirt performance of the TT600 are going to add fuel to the fire.

There is no way we could recommend the Tenere for any serious bush bashing or enduro work. If you want a four-stroke for this, then you buy the TT, because while the

**Continued over**



# YAMAHA XT600 TENERE

Tenere might be able to negotiate a tough trail it would be an uphill struggle every inch of the way. Which brings us to . . .

## SUSPENSION AND FRAME GEOMETRY

It's obvious that the Tenere has wildly different weight distribution to any other bike. The 30 litre tank takes care of that: no way you can quickly throw it into a fine line in a sudden corner.

As well, the suspension leaves a lot to be desired. Actually, it's the rear suspension which leaves the most to be desired, because quite simply it doesn't work. No way, no how. We took the Yamaha for a long jaunt on both tar and dirt roads and sent along a photographer who rode a VF750 Honda, the new road race type. Overlooking the obvious effects of the Honda's small 16" front wheel on dirt roads, the rear suspension (a crude Pro-Link setup designed for fast road riding more than anything) was every bit as good as the rear suspension on the Tenere. Bloody amazing.

When you hit a bump on the XT, the rear end just goes **THUD!** A flat, dead, useless **THUD!** You can't even seem to get any preload onto it so the rear of the bike returns after you compress it. It goes just so far, then stops dead as if it meets hydraulic lock of the oil inside the shock. Even sitting on the side-stand the rear sags out a couple of inches.

The culprit is the linkage design more than the shock itself. The XT uses a linkage of two pieces, like the TT, but where the main one on the TT is L-shaped and bolts through its elbow to a bracket welded to the underside of the swingarm, the XT's link is straight and bolts right through the centre of the swingarm section. We tried both backing off the preload, and jacking it up, but neither made any improvement to the way it worked.

On the road, or even on reasonable dirt roads, the rear worked pretty well, though, just like we thought it would. Without even being told we had sussed out that the XT wasn't a full-blooded racer. All the same, the way the rear works even on average dirt roads is disappointing.

Fortunately, the forks make up for it. At first glance we thought they'd need air pumped into them to hold up the extra weight of 30 litres of fuel, but even 5 psi was too much. Without any air they were fine, especially as the fuel level lowered.

The high centre of gravity mentioned earlier, courtesy of the huge tank, is neither here nor there as far as we're concerned. Sure, it has a huge effect on the handling of the bike when filled, but you know that when you buy the bike. And in view of the importance of the tank to the



**ABOVE**  
Yamaha's new 600cc engine is unreal. Not only is it easy to start (always first kick), but it doesn't vibrate and has perfect gear ratios. The dual intake carbs work well to minimise fuel consumption and maximise power, although they are difficult to tune or service.



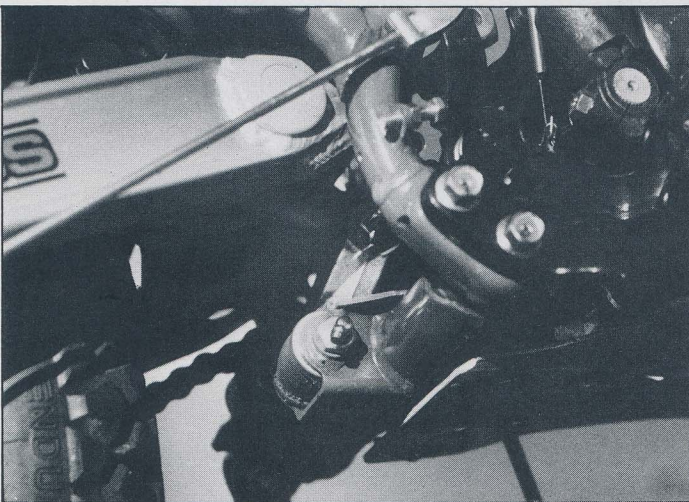
**ABOVE**  
Front suspension is more than adequate: the forks give less travel than the TT, and use smaller tubes, but they do the job with ease. When the tank is full you might find it necessary to pump them up a few psi. We can see owners fitting twin quartz halogen lights to really finish the bike off. Love the hand protectors, fork boots and fat front guard (just what you need in the desert . . .).

**ABOVE**  
It's obvious that this fuel tank makes the Tenere what it is. It's also largely unnecessary (if you'll excuse the pun) . . . there aren't too many places in Australia which only have service stations every 500 kms. We did 507 kms on one tank, with 1.5 litres left over. That's an average of 17.8 kms per litre, or 80 kms per gallon. All the same, we wouldn't like to see this tank disappear. And remember it costs around \$230 for a new one.



**ABOVE**  
A disc front brake is a road-oriented feature, but it's great to see it there. Works fine on or off road.

**LEFT**  
Our only real complaint on the Tenere is the lousy rear suspension. A completely different link setup to any other Yamaha is the culprit, we feel. Basically, this one is cheap, nasty and ineffective even for the Tenere's intended use. It's one feature we'd really have liked kept from the TT. It uses a steel bodied shock with no oil reservoir and no damping adjustment.



appeal of the bike, it's a small price to pay.

Which means that handling isn't too important at all, because the relatively high centre of gravity and the minimal rear suspension have the lion's say in the overall handling. But that's not a criticism. As far as we are concerned, the Tenere is just fine. It did everything we wanted it to do and then some. So on the list of important things to a Tenere owner, we figure handling is way down around tenth spot, behind such major issues as appeal, tank capacity, good lighting, excellent brakes and comfortable touring position for the rider.

## WHAT ABOUT AN OUTBACK SAFARI?

Murray Crawford in Melbourne runs a company known as Outback Safaris, which takes riders on extensive trips into the outback (see elsewhere in this issue), so it was a natural that we asked his opinion.

Without having ridden the bike he was sure it could do any of his trips with safety. He didn't say anything about comfort, and in fact ventured to say that perhaps a Tenere rider would be battling the high centre of gravity more than a rider on an XL600 and from that point of view he would be having a harder time of it.

He also said that for his trips, where the maximum distance between refuels was 200 miles, tops, the huge 30 litre tank was a case of overkill (our words, not his).

He thought that with decent tyres and a half full tank, it would be fine in the outback.

Just like we figured: a TT would run rings around it, but it's OK.

## ENGINE

Pure magic. They've had an eternity designing big 500cc four-strokes at Yamaha, and the experience shows in the XT engine. There are a few differences to the TT, though: the TT has a lower 1st gear, although all the others are the same, and the overall primary drive ratio is the same. Sprockets are wildly different: the TT has 14/50 sprockets, while the XT has 15/39 toothers. If that doesn't tell you what the XT is meant for, nothing will. The XT has a milder lift cam. Carburettors are the same — Teikei's twin Y27PV.

The 600 engines run the camshaft without any bearings in the head — just metal to metal. This is fine if the oil supply is filtered, so the 600s have a changeable oil filter just like in your family car. There are four valves in the head for greater efficiency, and the cam of the XT, being milder lift, is better suited for longer trips rather than dirt performance where you need more instant zap.

As far as the carbs go, the idea is technically very sound. You get better fuel economy and better throttle response at any setting, but they are not something that you tinker with when you have 30 seconds to spare. We'd hate to own an old bike with dual carbs that have become dirty and worn.

Continued over

# Breathing life into a Paris-Dakar lookalike



It must be hard for the designers working in consumer goods industries — they have to endure as much pressure from the marketing boys as from the performance people when they create a product like the Tenere.

The Japanese firmly believe that the more completely different and specialised motorcycles they offer, the more sales they'll make. It's hard to argue when you look at their proven sales record around the world.

So for a company like Yamaha to create a TT600, designed from the ground up to be a road legal four-stroke performance dirt bike (and a very successful design, too, we might add), it's not so difficult to sit down at the computer terminal and design a whole different bike using the same basic engine. Because that's what the Tenere is.

There is virtually nothing common between the rolling chassis of the TT600, and the rolling chassis of the Tenere.

And the logical question is, why bother? Why not just slap a huge 30 litre tank and a shorter seat and suspension on a TT, call it a Tenere, and sell squillions of them? Simple and cheap, surely.

Strangely, with the Japanese production systems, it's just as easy to build two different machines as it is to build one, give or take a little effort. Today so much is known about designing different motorcycles to perform different tasks that new models can be designed very quickly, with little or no need to spend exhaustive years in development.

And that brings us to the Tenere. It's nothing like a TT600, just as it is nothing like the actual bikes Yamaha entered in the famed Paris-Dakar marathon last year.

Let's take a close look at the differences.

The Tenere is obviously intended as a long distance hauler, with perhaps token trips into the dirt on reasonable dirt roads such as you'd find on a trip around Australia. Anything more hard core in the dirt is the domain of the TT600, and that's that.

Because of this, the Tenere starts with a completely different frame. Look at the photos and you'll see that nothing is the same except the positions of the bolt holes for the engine. There are extra tubes, gussets and bolt holes all over, and the Tenere obviously is intended to last a long time with complete reliability and minimal maintenance.

Shorter suspension on the Tenere is also radically different to the TT. Mounting the rear shock linkages is the biggest visible difference, because the Tenere uses a system found on none of Yamaha's performance models like the YZ and IT series. Instead, the Tenere has a system of two straight links bolted together and pinned through the centre of the swingarm. As well, the shock absorber is steel bodied (the TT has an alloy body) and has neither a remote oil reservoir nor adjustable damping. Naturally, it gets less travel at the wheel, too.

Up front, the forks have shorter legs with less of them protruding beneath the axle, they have smaller diameter tubes and there is no adjuster for damping, all in addition to what are obviously different damping rods.

As you might guess for road riding, the brakes are a lot more sophisticated than those on the TT: the Tenere has an excellent disc up front, and the rear brakes are much larger. Their feel on the road is on a par with any good road bike, and in the dirt they're just as good as a good dirt bike.

One of the main problems with a big four-stroke single dirt bike is the high centre of gravity, and usually designers can shorten the height of the engine, which in turn helps lower the centre of gravity a little. They do this by using what is known as a dry sump engine, meaning most of the oil is carried in a reservoir somewhere and is simply circulated through the engine. Up till now, the easiest place to store this oil has been the top frame tube, which effectively counteracts lowering the height of the engine anyway. Yamaha's TT and Tenere both

use an oil reservoir which is a tank bolted to the frame behind the engine, and which is much lower. Good idea. But for the Tenere they went one further.

A major problem with four-strokes that do a lot of fast miles is overheating, so Yamaha's engineers added an oil cooler just in front of the reservoir, just beside the carbs, and oil is sent through this as well to keep oil heat to a minimum. Nice touch.

Both models use the engine as a stressed member of the frame because they both use effective counterbalancers which all but eliminate engine vibration. Similarly, both use Yamaha's dual intake carburettor system which not only increases fuel economy, but acts to increase the performance of the engine at high rpm. Both exhaust pipes look the same, but the Tenere has a smaller outlet hole in the bung in the end of the silencer.

Like we said, the engines of both are pretty much the same. The differences are elsewhere. Like tyres: the Tenere runs a dual purpose compromise tyre that does a reasonable job on both tar and dirt. Our test bike came fitted with Metzeler's dual purpose tyres, which were installed by Homebush Motorcycles in Sydney, and which do an even better job on the tar.

There's a completely different swingarm, too, unlike anything else in Yamaha's whole range. Actually, as much as we can understand the other differences, this one leaves us wondering. It mounts differently, connects to the shock differently and has different chain adjusters. The airbox is completely different, the lid screwing on with four screws and the air inlet being through a hood baffle arrangement. Electrics are 12 volt instead of 6 volt. Lighting up front is quartz halogen. Blinkers are trail oriented and far bigger than those on the TT. The instruments are different. There's a cable operated handlebar-mounted choke lever, just like current road bikes. Throttles are different. Mudguards and sidecovers are completely different. The gearshifter and kickstarter are steel, not alloy like the TT. Chainguard is longer. Rims are different. There are handlebar lever protectors. A carry rack. Tool container. Taillight is bigger. There's an alloy bashplate.

And there's the whopping 30 litre tank (steel, not alloy) and short red/black safety seat to finish the whole package. Naturally, all the graphics are different too.

So even though at first glance you'd swear it was the same as a TT, the Tenere is a one-off production designed from the ground up to go around Australia. It has all the convenience features any rider expects on a good roadbike, but it's close enough to being a dirt bike that it can do both jobs well.

It's obvious that when they told the computer what they wanted, it fed them the right information and for once both the marketing boys and the performance crowd could both be satisfied.

Just like all the owners of Teneres.



# YAMAHA XT600 TENERE

Starting the 600 is a delight. Turn it over slowly with the lever until you hear a click, raise the lever back to the top, and boot it hard with no throttle. Ours worked better with a little throttle when it was hot. But it starts first kick every time.

On the road, even with the radical gearing of the sprockets, we were unable to coax any more than 150 km/hr out of the XT, and that was downhill on tar, feet on the pillion pegs, laid down flat on the tank. 150 tops. Suppose now we'll get a hundred letters from irate owners who "easily" get 170 km/hr out of theirs.

With a variety of riding, including city, freeway, dirt roads and cross country, we easily had 507kms out of one tank with 1.5 litres left. At easier throttle settings you'll get even more. And that's the crux of the matter.

The XT is meant for untold hours at 120 kms/hr over reasonable roads. Will it do it? Yeah, easily. It's just perfect.

## THE POSE

This bike is a dirt rider's wet dream. Everywhere you ride, people look at it; everywhere you park, people come over and ask questions about it; every time you fill 'er up, the attendant blows his mind. It's unreal, and we figure the image of this bike is everything.

But unlike some bikes in the past, bikes which had certain images but little or no substance behind the image, the Tenere has also been given the full treatment. In fact, the only thing on the whole bike to which we take exception is the rear suspension, and even that can be overlooked because of everything else.

Somehow, Yamaha's designers have been able to come up with a fine blend between road performance and equipment, and off-road performance and equipment. It's a very comfortable bike to ride for long distances, with a wide, well padded seat made of just the right foam density. The rear footpegs are in just the right place for the rider to rest on during high speed straight line runs. Even the white plastic handguards stop wind chill on your hands late at night in July. The engine counterbalancers all but eliminate vibration reaching the rider, and the silencing is superb.

Steering is better than most Yamahas have ever been (as with all K models), geometries have been altered for the better with attempts being made to lower the centre of gravity by relocating the oil reservoir and redesigning the Monoshock system. Yamaha's forks keep improving and generally everything works in harmony.

Having a 12 volt electrical system means it runs a quartz halogen headlight, a must for any night rid-

ing. The gearing and gear ratios have been chosen to allow a rider to do anything from pottering over rock-strewn ground at a snail's pace to creaming down the freeway at a steady 130 km/hr. Actually, we think the Tenere could easily pull another tooth higher on the countershaft, but we've been told by experienced round-Australia riders that the maximum cruising speed necessary is 120 km/hr anyway so the engineers appear to have thought of everything.

They've even put slosh baffles inside the fuel tank to minimise fuel sloshing around and affecting handling more than necessary.

We're impressed by the absolute attention to detail, and the fact that the Japanese seem to be sorting out their designs a lot better than in the past. Gone, it seems, are the days when you would go on for ten pages about all the faults with their bikes then save your skin with a distributor by saying in the last sentence that you liked the bike.

## CONCLUSION

This bike does its intended job as well as if not better than any other bike in the 1983 Yamaha lineup. We would like to see better rear suspension for sure, because the current monoshock system on the real dirt bikes is fully able to cope with road riding as well. In fact, that's the whole point of the new link systems — soft suspension for the first part of the stroke, getting progressively stiffer as the stroke increases.

But as far as this goes we're only snivelling. The XT handles road riding a lot better than many road bikes available these days, with their excessive weights causing their spindly frames to flex like wet spaghetti. And when you hit the dirt, you can still blast along as if you were suddenly on a true dirt bike.

When it comes to the pose value of the XT, it can't be beaten. Honda had the chance to market a similar version of their own Paris-Dakar-winning bike last year and they failed to do it. The Tenere won't go out the dealer's door under \$3000, which makes it an expensive Japanese bike, but they're selling like hot cakes. A major segment of buyers are old roadbike owners who are smart enough to understand that the Tenere will not only outhandle their road bikes, but will keep performing off-road as well.

All the same, we'd lay odds on the bet that hardly any Teneres will ever stand beside Ayers Rock, or negotiate the Birdsville Track, or sit at Cape York. They'll be too busy sitting around in cities and towns looking cool, their owners basking in their afterglow.

They're sort of not what they appear to be, and yet they're exactly what they appear to be.

They're sort of not hard core dirt bikes, and yet they're as posey as they appear at first glance.

There's a cafe near the base of Ayers Rock. If ever they make a TV ad to sell more XT600s, that's what they'll park it outside of.



# ROUND AUSTRALIA SQUARE on Yamaha's Tenere

**H. Muz likes to do things properly, and when given the task of testing the Yamaha's XT600 Tenere he decided to give the sort of test a bike of this calibre deserves. Where most people take the quickest most direct route, H Muz did it the hard way. The Cape, across to Perth, Nullarbor, Ayres, Simpson, and finally back home.**

**W**hen I picked up the Tenere I was immediately impressed with the functional appearance of the machine. I couldn't wait to ride the bike to see if it lived up to my expectations. Much of the next day was spent in preparation for my epic journey. With a trip of this magnitude there are always a million and one details to attend to and high on my list of priorities was, of course, not notifying the police of my route and various ETAs (estimated time of arrivals). What with one thing and another I didn't get home until around 9pm and even then I was too excited to eat or sleep a great deal.

I woke before the alarm and got underway immediately to get the jump on Sydney morning traffic which was worse than usual due to one of the regular train strikes.

I opened the door of the garage and there sat the mighty Tenere. Its beautiful white sculptured tank seemed to glow in the half light which indicated dawn was fast approaching.

I stood in silence for what must have been several minutes, and pondered on what might lie ahead.

Then I seemed to become a part of the big white Yammie, and I knew the time was right. I had to go. Now! It seemed the bike wanted to go as well. It fired first kick and the big piston settled into an easy rhythm. I snicked the gearlever into first, eased out the clutch and we were away.

I kept within the speed limit on my run down through the northern beach suburbs and so had plenty of time to notice that the digital display on my SuperSport One Million Quartz Halogen silicon chipperama 1000 fathom wrist watch read 6.08 am as I crossed the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Picking up speed, I turned onto the less popular route of the Princes Highway and headed south. I was making good time and was onto Captain Cook Drive before 7 am. It was only a matter of time before I would be at the Cape.

As I expected, the place was virtually deserted, but gazing out over the Pacific Ocean in a silence broken only every 2 or 3 minutes by the sound of large passenger-jet aircraft engines climbing from Sydney's International airport just across Botany Bay, I couldn't help but feel a sense of understanding with that other great explorer, Captain James Cook, as he stood on this very same spot all those years ago.

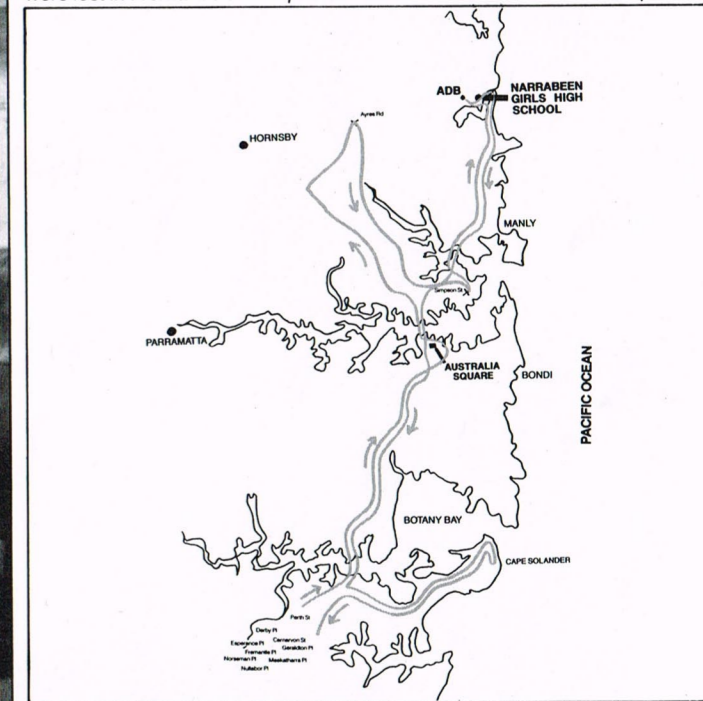


Still, no time for quixotic dreaming. I had a long ride in front of me. My proud white steed rumbled eagerly to life with one good muscular prod from my Agostini autographed, hand-made Italian leather riding boot (with concealed zippers) and my wealth of riding talent enabled me to U-turn the bike on the fairly narrow scenic driveway without putting my foot down. Not even once.

By sheer coincidence, a rider on a big Yamaha 1000 road bike chose this very minute to arrive at the tip of the Cape. In a typical display of motorcycle camaraderie, I stopped to let him admire my machine while I politely resisted the urge to comment on the grubby appearance of his machine. Especially compared to mine, which still looked like a million dollars.

It turned out he was a Swiss schoolteacher on a round the world trip and although he spoke only a little English, I was able, through my wonderful talent for expression, to convey to him that I wanted him to take a photo of me and Tenere in front of the Captain Cook Memorial Obelisk.

That done I retraced my tracks until I hit the Bates Drive intersection, then pegged the throttle as I flashed through Derby, Carnarvon, Geraldton, Meekatharra (I thought I was lost for a while) then, suddenly, I was in Perth. I had planned on fueling up and getting a bit to eat here but there were no shops, so I pressed on. A few minutes were lost in Fremantle and Esperance but soon Norseman loomed up.



The gateway to the Nullarbor. I made quick work of the Nullarbor and was lucky not to meet any traffic at all, yet the trip to Ayres seemed to take forever, and the peak hour traffic (by this time it was well after 8am) on the Cahill Expressway didn't make things any easier. As I motored past the sand dune sails of Sydney's Opera House, my trustee big single purring along just as strongly as it had at the beginning of the trip, the fatigue, the aching muscles, the dirty riding gear, caked-in bulldust, none of it seemed quite so bad. And as I straightened up from the cloverleaf on-ramp accelerating onto the Sydney Harbour Bridge, it occurred to me that I had now, technically speaking, completed my trip round Australia Square. I wasn't satisfied though. I wouldn't be finished until I had seen Ayres St in North St Ives and done a solo crossing of the Simpson.

The worst of the traffic was over by the time I packed up my camera equipment at the intersection of Ayres Rd and Mawson St and I had a relatively incident-free run down the Pacific Highway past the legendary Black Stump restaurant in North Sydney and across to my penultimate destination . . . Simpson St in Mosman.

I had absolutely no trouble with the huge sand dunes I had heard so much about. In fact I was a little disappointed (though pleased at how effortlessly the XT had handled the crossing) as I headed home to a hero's welcome at the ADB offices.

It was three minutes to ten as I turned the key to stop the motor of the incredibly reliable Tenere, which meant I had completed the entire trip in less than four and a half hours! Incredible. What a ride. What a rider. What a motorcycle! I couldn't have done it on anything else. I didn't even have to refuel.

There's only one thing I would like to say to anyone planning a round Australia Square trip, and that's "get a Tenere!" It's a machine made for the job. Especially if you plan to take in all the famous landmarks as I did. I can't think of a better machine for the job.