



**W**HEN it comes to organising 'a big ride' each year involving a big bunch of blokes and some big kilometres over multiple days, my mates and I always hit the same wall. A lack of time, or a lack of willing 4WD support truck drivers, or a lack of the all-important permission slips from the missus, can make or break getting away for a full-on week of outback trail riding fun. And let's face it: we all need to blow off some steam and get away from the daily grind on the big ride for the year ... so what to do? Well, it's times like this when businesses like OutYonda Trail Bike Adventures can take all the hassle out of everything and turn your dream ride into reality.

A couple of down-to-earth blokes named Brett and Steve (AKA Botch) are the driving forces behind WA-based OutYonda and they offer various packages where they take care of the food, fuel and camping gear, leaving you free to just rock up with your bike and swag. You can join on one of their regular scheduled rides, or OutYonda also do custom trips through their OutBack Logistics arm. You simply tell them where you want to go and they do the rest, leaving you and your mates to just enjoy the fun of riding in usually inaccessible and out of reach areas.

OutYonda are well known through a TV documentary called 'The Ride' which aired last Christmas about four paraplegic riders who travelled around Australia re-visiting the scenes of their accidents. They were assisted by the OutYonda crew, who took care of all the logistics and planned the coast-to-coast trip. If you get a chance to view the documentary, check it out.

I'd heard about OutYonda on the grapevine, then saw some of their promo videos on YouTube, so I decided to tag along on one of their custom adventure tours. I also persuaded some of my mates to come along, with the promise of, 'All riding, no carrying!' In the end around 20 riders turned up, all wishing to experience the WA outback on a trail ride but not willing to give up the fun of riding a light and nimble enduro bike.

### **BUILT TONKA TOUGH**

Brett runs a fleet of Aussie-built, Tonka-tough OKA 4x4 trucks and each one is set up for a particular purpose. One is a dedicated kitchen truck that Brett likes to drive, while another, driven by Adrian and his wife Maree, is for all the riders' gear and camp equipment. The third OKA, with Kevin at the helm, hauls the fuel to feed up to 20-plus bikes for the duration of the ride. The three OKA trucks mostly keep to the highways and gravel roads, meeting up with the bikes at the evening's camp site. A fourth vehicle, a much loved and often repaired Lada Niva, is driven by young Dylan and is used as the chase car in case of unforeseen problems along the trail route.

Our ride was set to take us from Kalgoorlie heading east to the Plumridge Lakes Nature Reserve and then north-west to the remote Laverton area before finally tracking south back to Kalgoorlie. It looked like being an easy eight-day ride with a planned distance of around 1,400km for the trip.

The ride began on a Saturday as we set off to meet the OutYonda crew near Kalgoorlie. However this plan was very nearly derailed by one small town's malfunctioning fuel bowser.

Luckily a phone call to Brett put us onto a mate of his in town who happily sold us 20 litres of diesel to get us to the next larger town and working fuel bowser.

Our crew of riders were already in Kalgoorlie waiting, so we headed east to the gold mining ghost town of Bulong to unload, eat and wait for any other riders to show. In Bulong the three OKAs were ready and waiting, as Maree and Mary had the commercial-sized camp kitchen heated and ready to feed the troops.

### **FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS**

Despite being far too excited to sleep, Sunday morning finally arrived and it was time to head east. Leaving the OKAs behind, Botch led the way, he and his Husaberg clearly champing at the bit. Mingling with the rest of the riders was Trev the cameraman, with his helmet cam recording the action, while at the rear was Chris, the designated sweep rider - ready and willing to eat dirt for the week.

There was excellent desert riding right off the bat, as we zig-zagged around the myriad of old mine shafts that have been left abandoned throughout the Goldfields. A few feral goats took flight from the noise but there was little else in the way of animals on the first day. A few lads managed to get lost in the initial excitement but were rounded up and returned to the flock. The weather in the Goldfields can be hot and the first day was a good example of the need to be prepared, with good hydration a must. One of the riders got a touch of heat-stroke and was put into a vehicle for the rest of the day with his bike being trucked. A good lesson in drinking water even if you don't feel the need.

