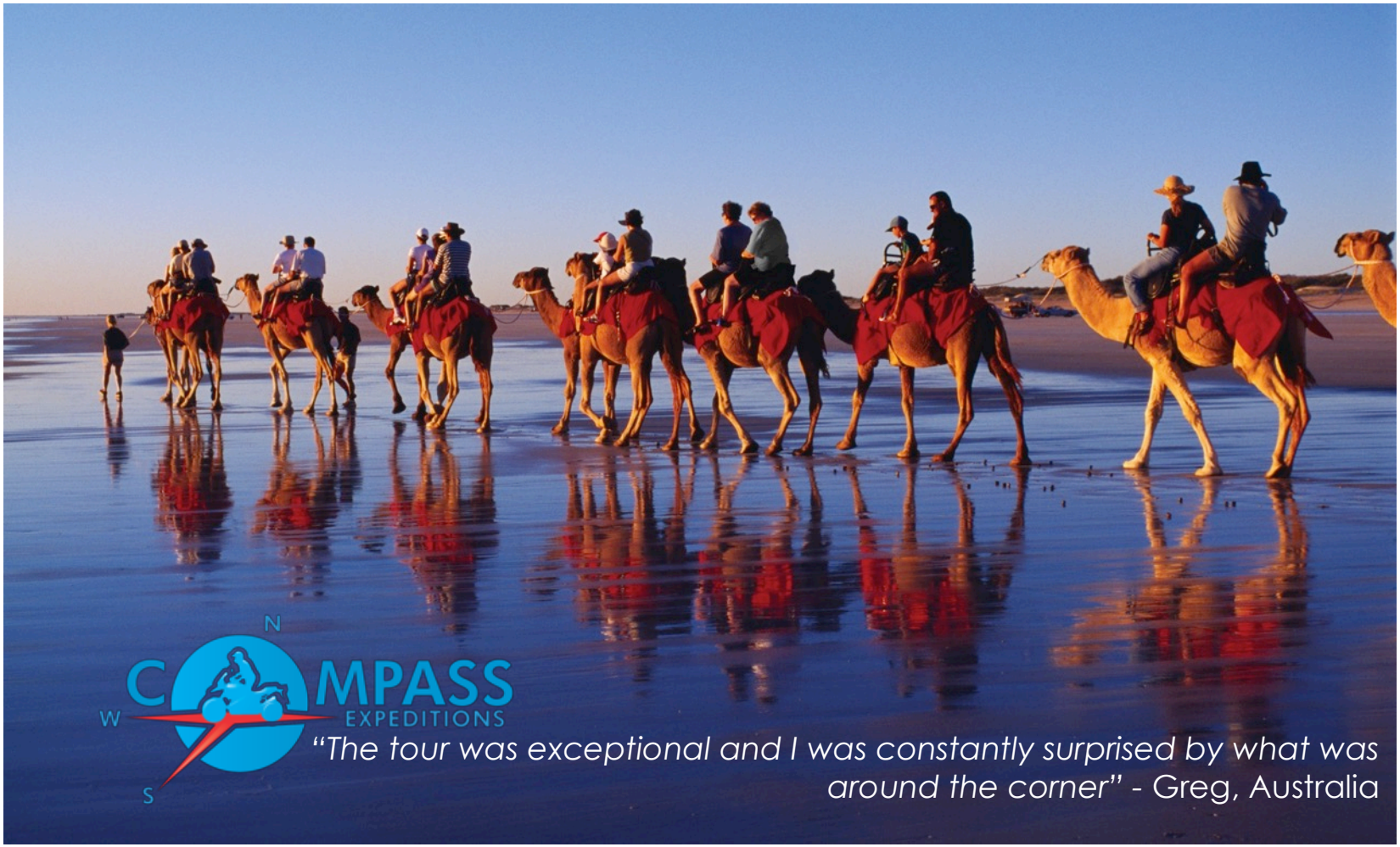
North West Passage: 14 Days

Information Kit

Northern Territory & Western Australia: Ride a vast, empty & rugged landscape of clear blue skies, deep canyons and immense ranges to the Indian Ocean.



"The tour was exceptional and I was constantly surprised by what was around the corner" - Greg, Australia

This is an epic ride that covers some of the most iconic of Australian landscapes, from the awe inspiring Uluru through the epic Tanami Desert to the equally awe inspiring Kimberley Region. If Remote riding, ancient escarpment landscapes, desert sands & stunning blue oceans are your thing then this 14-day ride through the very heart of this ancient continent is your thing.

Itinerary

Joining Day: Alice Springs

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

Day One: Glen Helen

Leaving Alice Springs mid morning to arrive at the spectacular Stanley Chasm late morning to catch the most spectacular time of day when the noon day sun briefly fills the chasm in daylight turning the towering canyon walls a bright red colour. Continuing on through the scenic West MacDonnell Ranges National Park we arrive at our overnight stop of Glen Helen Homestead Lodge mid afternoon allowing us time to visit the stunning Glen Helen Gorge on the Finke River & maybe a cooling swim.

Day Two: Kings Canyon

We hit the dirt of the iconic Mereenie Loop Road today that traverses ancient landscapes of red walled canyons, valleys, red desert sands and spinifex before arriving at the spectacular Kings Canyon in the Watarrka National Park.

Days Three & Four: Uluru

We spend the morning doing the "Rim walk" around Kings Canyon, an amazing canyon of 100 m high sandstone walls with palm filled crevices. We hit the pavement again for an easy ride through endless beautiful desert landscapes before arriving at one of the greatest natural spectacles on earth, Uluru located in the geographical heart of Australia. We will ride out to the sunset viewing point for what will be one of the highlights of the ride; the spectacular sunset where the rock literally changes colour before our eyes. The following day is a rest day allowing us time to visit the "rock" and also the nearby Kata Tjuta, a striking group of domed rock formations 30 km west of Uluru.

Day Five: Alice Springs

Today takes us, via the pavement, back to Alice Springs stopping en-route at the remote Curtain Springs and Erldunda Roadhouses. We will get great views of Mt Connor, which many people mistake for being Uluru.

Days Six & Seven: Wild-camps

We enter the legendary Tanami Desert via the longest "shortcut" in Australia, the Tanami Track, a remote desert ride from the heart of Australia to the renowned Kimberley's. The nights camping here under an immense carpet of stars surrounded by utter silence will possibly be the highlight of the trip.

Day Eight: Halls Creek

With the Tanami behind us we enter the vast Kimberley region of Western Australia, larger than some European countries. It's a rugged landscape of escapements and stony gorges dotted with tropical waterholes surrounded by tropical forest. We overnight at Halls Creek, a service town located on the edge of the Tanami & Great Sandy Deserts.

Day Nine: Lake Argyle

Lake Argyle is our destination and is Western Australia's largest and Australia's second largest freshwater man-made reservoir. We stay overnight at the wonderful Lake Argyle Resort and take a short ride up to Sunset Point to watch the sun dip over some absolutely breathtaking scenery.

Days Ten & Eleven: Home Valley Station

A late start will allow us time to visit the Durack homestead, a reminder of the colonial story of the pioneering Durack family, and some unmarked Aboriginal rock art. A short paved section brings us back to Kununurra in the beautiful East Kimberley region of Western Australia before we hit one of Australia's most iconic rides, the Gibb River Road. Two nights are spent at the outback station of Home Valley. There are two swimming pools to enjoy and activities such as horse riding, natural waterhole swimming, barramundi fishing and a variety of walks to nearby gorges.

Day Twelve: Manning Gorge
The original Gibb River Road was constructed in the early 1960's to provide the isolated cattle stations with a transport link to the ports of Wyndham and Derby. Manning Gorge is our destination with a beautiful swimming hole located right next to our campsite. There is the option for a 3 hr return walk to the Gorge.

Day Thirteen: Derby
Today's section of the Gibb River Road is mostly gravel but the road turns to pavement as we approach Derby. We will have lunch at Tunnel Creek National Park which has one of the Kimberley's most interesting cave systems and makes a great place to see fruit bats, freshwater crocodiles and bird life.

Day Fourteen: Broome
Our final ride takes us into Broome, the Kimberley's western gateway with an exotic pearling history. The white sandy beaches of the Indian Ocean add to the diversity of landscapes and tracks that we have covered in the last amazing month that took in so much of what makes iconic Australia.

Departure day: Broome
Spend some time in Broome or fly home, the choice is yours.

Ride Details

Ride Grade: 4

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

50% of this ride is on pavement; some sections of pavement can be potholed, narrow and be not much more than a series of potholes connected by a thin ribbon of asphalt. Some roads have tall shoulders and all are VERY remote. Riders must be prepared for wandering stock and erratic Kangaroos, emus and the world's biggest trucks.

50% of this ride will be on dirt. The vast majority of dirt is hard packed and is used by heavy transport, so not technical or difficult however there are sections that can have loose gravel, washouts and can be rutted especially where roadwork's are being undertaken or experienced recent rains, generally these sections don't last for long. Some sections are prone to "bulldust" holes, (super fine dust that covers a pothole) and some sections we will experience sand although very little. Australian tracks are notoriously changeable depending on how many 120 tonne roadtrains have been over them recently and of course any recent rains.

Distances

The biggest riding day is 550 km / 340 mi with the shortest being 160 km / 100 mi. Most riding days we average around 200 – 250 km / 125 – 160 mi. There are numerous rest days in our itinerary, where the bike is available for more riding if desired (subject to any maintenance requirements). The total distance is approximately 3880 km / 2410 mi.

Bikes

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

Experience required

Some off- road riding experience is preferred for this tour, mainly due to the fact that we do cover significant distance off road, rather than anything being too technical or difficult. Co-Riders can travel in the support vehicle at anytime, if any dirt becomes too challenging. Although not a requirement, Compass Expeditions does recommend an off road training course that gives riders, of all levels, the tools to tackle off road riding. Contact us for more information on training events and recommended schools.

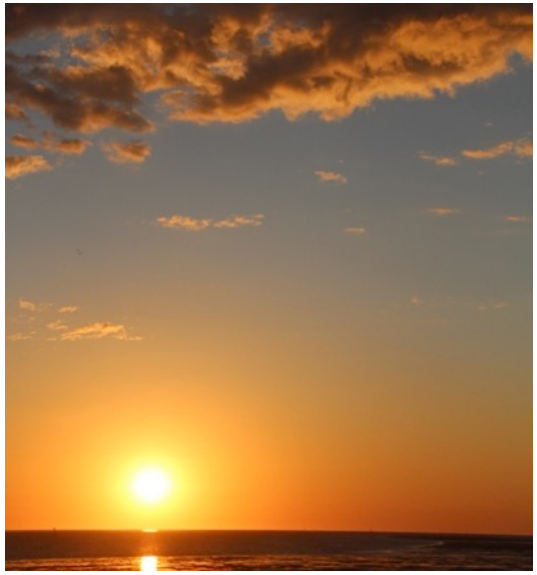
All riders **must** have a valid motorcycle license.

Weather

It is winter in Northern Australia, so we can expect some beautiful sunny ride days. Average daily temperatures are around 20 and 30 degrees C (68 and 86 degrees F) in the west and 20 to 25 degrees C (68 to 77 degrees F) in the centre, some humidity should be expected on the coastline as we near Broome. Little to no rainfall should be expected although around Uluru and Alice Springs, rarely if it does rain, July / August is when it will, but rainfalls are generally brief.

Highlights

- Riding the "Dreamtime Trail"
- Uluru at Sunset
- Kata Tjuta
- Kings Canyon
- Wild-camping in the Tanami
- Lake Argyle
- Gibb River Road
- Impossibly remote Home Valley Station on the Gibb River Road
- The epic ancient Kimberley's
- Broome



Meals

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

Breakfasts: **12**
Lunches: **10**
Dinners: **7**

Accommodation

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

Accommodation: **15 nights**

Tour Inclusions

- Airport Transfers
- Motorcycle rental as per your selection
- Fuel if riding Compass bike
- All Accommodation
- All meals as per itinerary
- Support vehicle with passenger carrying ability
- Services of ride leader and support vehicle driver
- Pre-departure material and route maps
- Access to satellite phone, pay per minute
- Compass Expeditions polo shirt
- Entrances to all national parks mentioned in the itinerary
- Durack Homestead entry
- Uluru 3 day pass
- Stanley Chasm entrance
- Canoeing in Lawn Hill National Park

Your Responsibilities

Riding equipment

You will need to bring the following riding gear:

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

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

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

Gloves: We recommend the use of both summer and winter (ideally waterproof) gloves, as the weather is extremely changeable.

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

Travel insurance

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

Passport & Visas

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

Links to CIBT / Compass page for visa applications, for other nationalities please contact us directly.

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

Vaccinations

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

You've made a booking, what happens next?

Once a booking has been made, you will receive an automated booking confirmation. Soon after, you will receive a "welcome" email, and then receive our comprehensive pre departure booklet in the post. This booklet will prepare you for your adventure and has more details on what to bring and what to expect. We email a "tour dossier" 90 days before departure; this dossier is full of information, including historical and country information. The more you read, the more you will get out of your ride.

Thanks for spending your time reading this information kit. We hope it has inspired you to challenge yourself, if not riding with us then just riding and enjoying this remarkable world that we live in.

If you have further questions, please contact us.

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