

**L**IFE SHOULD come with a few more bonuses every now and then. Take flying overseas: the airlines should dish out more bonus upgrades to business class for us poor saps who are destined to spend life crammed down the back of the bus in cattle-class. Because when you do get the gold class treatment, you really do appreciate it ... unless you happen to be Dr Phil!

So there we are, the good Doctor and myself, comfortably settling into our bonus business class upgrade seats for the flight to New Zealand, but do you think Dr Phil gets pumped up about the luxurious seat, the delicious waft of potpourri in the bathroom or the roasted eggplant appetiser? No, of course not.

Instead the Doctor gets fired up about what he can pinch!

"Hey, this linen table cloth will make an awesome work sheet on the ride, and those hand napkins in the crapper are gonna be perfect as goggle wipes," he froths. "And look at these knives and forks, the ends are just about the same taper

as Metzeler tyre levers – so they're coming with me, too: use 'em at lunch and then use 'em at the next tube change ... perfect!"

Ah yes, the good Doctor is always on the look-out for a handy trail tip, even if it means cleaning out the galley on his first-ever business class flight and running the risk of getting sprung and being black-balled by every airline for life!

### RIDE THE SAFARI, IT'S GONNA BE CHOICE, EH BRO?

So what was the **TRAIL ZONE** team doing, living the jet-setting lifestyle? Why it was the first week of January, and that means it's Yamaha NZ Safari time. So grab your passport, pack your gear bag with 20 kilos of your finest trail riding attire and make a bee-line across the ditch for a three-day dose of trail bike bliss that packs in more mighty views per kilometre than anywhere else.

We got hooked on the NZ Safari last year, when Yamaha staged the Australasian media release of the new WR250R Supertrail bike in conjunction

# KiwiSafariGold

For a country so small, the trail riding is sensationally big. We're talking about New Zealand and once again **TRAIL ZONE** was lucky enough to be part of the annual Yamaha NZ Safari: a gold-plated three-day high-mileage ride through the stunning south island.

Story & Photography: Clubby // Business Class Hob-Nobbing: Dr Phil



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**MAIN:** The long run north from Hanmer Springs through Molesworth Station offers majestic views like this the whole way. **1.** The ranks of pillion riders swelled to nine adventurous couples this year. **2.** How many Kiwis does it take to fix a flat front tyre? Looks like the answer is five! **3.** Lunchtime refuel on day two, where the fuel had to be trucked in specifically for the Safari participants.

with the 2008 NZ Safari in the Mackenzie country in the centre of the south island of New Zealand. Check out **TRAIL ZONE** back issue copies #16 and #17 and you'll see why Popgun and I were so stoked on the event.

This time we ponied up for our airfares and with the promise of a couple of WR250Rs courtesy of Yamaha Motor NZ head honcho, Peter Payne (thanks Mr P!), which were prepped by Yamaha NZ's top toolmen Phil Winter and Dave Cole (thanks boys!), we were back for the 2009 Yamaha NZ Safari – yee haa.

### HOT SPRINGS HOT SPOT

The resort village of Hanmer Springs and the plush Heritage Hotel was the base for this year's NZ Safari. It's located about 90 minutes drive north of Christchurch, toward the north-east corner of the south island, and perched in the foothills of the mountain ranges that punch skyward the entire length of the island. As the

name suggests, the town is renowned for the Hanmer Springs hot springs and thermal pools, which would later prove to be the perfect post-ride wind down for many a rider's tired and weary muscles.

The majority of the Safari's total of 159 participants (which included nine couples riding pillion!) were based at the Heritage Hotel, and by the time we arrived just before the welcome dinner, the place was a thriving mass of trail and adventure bikes and riders, all scattered around the hotel grounds in various states of preparedness. Route sheets were being spliced together (the NZ Safari is a navigation ride), spares and tubes were being strapped in place and many a Speights was being polished off by those most serious about their pre-ride prep. This ride is as much about the social aspect as it is the stunning trails.

Just before midnight the Doctor and I finally had our act sorted, the bikes and backpacks loaded with tubes and spares and the route sheet rolled into the handlebar-mounted lunchbox (!), leaving us six hours kip before the off ... zzz.



**MAIN:** Day two delivered one of the real highlights of the ride: this stunning razorback ridgeline trail that was part of the optional enduro loop. 1. These girls set-up a trallside stop selling fresh baked cookies and cold drinks - and did a roaring trade. 2. This guy did well to get his big BMW GS all the way to the top of Mount Murchison on day three. 3. This BMW G 450 X set a cracking pace all weekend long.



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# Kiwi Safari Gold

## FANCY MEETING YOU HERE

Just three route sheet instructions into day one's course we hit the dirt proper, plunging into an icy river bed littered with round river stones and then climbed out the other side and up into the ranges north-east of Hanmer Springs. The pace was on, with the pack including everything from Yamaha DT230s and KTM 690 Enduros to Honda Dominators and BMW 1200s. There was even one hard core entrant on an old Kawasaki Z750 roadie with knobby rear tyre (for real!)

As we sorted ourselves out on a winding farm twin-track, I thought the DR-Z400E rider in front of me signaled for me to pass. I was wrong! As I slipped underneath him into a tight right turn, I realised he hadn't seen me, took his front wheel out and he plunged into a gloopy mud hole beside the trail. Oops!

Poggun stopped and I spun around to help the guy, hoping like mad he hadn't

cracked a collarbone or busted a lever at the very start of the ride. It turned out he was OK, and as he dusted himself off, he said, "Hey, aren't you Clubby?"

Bugger me! The guy turned out to be Ron MacNeil from Freemantle, WA, and he's a **TRAIL ZONE** subscriber, and he flew all the way over to Kiwi and hired a bike to ride the Safari after reading our stories on last year's event! Talk about a small world and less than 11km into the ride Ron already had a cracker story to tell his mates back home.

## RACING DAVE'S DAY

The Yamaha NZ Safari course is laid out over three distinct loops, one per day, with event boss Mike Britton using the services of local 'expert' guides to plan each day's route. Day one was the work of south island trail boss Dave Britten

## ► SAFARI SUPERTRAIL

**TEAM TRAIL ZONE** lined up for the NZ Safari aboard a pair of Yamaha WR250R Supertrail machines, and they came through the 1,150km ride with flying colours. The four-valve, fuel-injected pocket rockets were fitted with Dunlop knobby tyres and heavy-duty tubes, Acerbis handguards, route sheet holders and rear carry racks courtesy of

Yamaha NZ, then we added Filter Skins, Pro-Fast head light shields and rego plate holders, and on my bike we fitted a Wolfman Peak tail bag and Kelly Enduro fender bag to carry spare tubes and tools. Amazingly, though, we never copped a flat, but if we hadn't been carrying plenty of spare tubes, you can bet we would have! The WR-Rs lapped up the ride, never missed a beat and dished up a fuel economy average of 23km per litre. - Clubby



## I realised he hadn't seen me and promptly took his front wheel out ... sorry, mate!

(no relation to Mike) who steered the pack north-east from Hanmer Springs out to the coast at Gore Bay, then south before finally looping back up to Hanmer.

The weather was grey and overcast all day, with a couple of showers, and while a few of us did manage to get lost just before the first refuel, the only disappointment was the afternoon's much anticipated trail section being closed off by a local landowner. It cut the day slightly short, and Dave was mortified, but when you consider the huge miles the NZ Safari covers and the incredible access the event gains from local landowners (which is only granted to organised rides like this), it's amazing it doesn't happen more often. When the route sheet takes you through the front gate of a remote high country sheep station and you idle by a lonely homestead, into the back paddock via a gate that is locked the other 364 days of the year, and then start climbing into the mountains, you just know you're getting access guys like Dave have worked very, very hard to achieve.

# KiwiSafariGold



**MAIN:** Crystal clear river crossings are a regular part of the NZ Safari route and give riders and bikes a chance to wash the dust off. 1. Yamaha NZ boss Peter Payne knows the NZ Safari is the number one trail ride on the Kiwi calendar. The lucky bugger stayed on after the event for three more days checking out trails with Geoff Ballard for next year's Safari! 2. Aussie Barkbusters wrecking crew riders Matthew Phillipott and Mick Hockley take in the view. 3. Local Kiwi adventure rider Brian Cox couldn't wait any longer to get a new Yamaha Tenere, so he imported one direct from the UK. And yes, he loves it! 4. Three square meals a day are all part of the NZ Safari package. 5. Mike Britton is the man who ties all the loose ends together to make the Yamaha NZ Safari a reality. 6. A post-ride soak in the Hanmer Springs thermal pools did wonders to ease those aching muscles.

## ▶ LET'S STICK TOGETHER

**CALL IT** true love or perhaps it's a case of wives/girlfriends wanting to share in their partner's hobby, but no less than nine pillion pairings lined up for the 2009 Yamaha NZ Safari. Riding the Safari course two-up is no mean feat and each and every couple deserve special congratulations for their achievement. Shayne and Tracey Worboys (pictured) rode the event two-up on a thumping Yamaha XT660R, after Shayne completed last year's event solo and thought it would be fun (and a challenge) to bring the missus along this time. Tracey says she has total faith in the pilot: "I just look over his shoulder and hold on, up hills, down hills, it's all great fun!" Amongst



a lot of highlights from the ride, they say the best was conquering Mount Murchison on the final day, when other riders said they wouldn't make it up the steep, loose, switchback climb. "But we did it and the views up there were excellent," said Steve. "But coming down was another story, as we lost the back brake, which made for some nail biting moments!"

## GO NORTH, YOU ADVENTUROUS SOULS

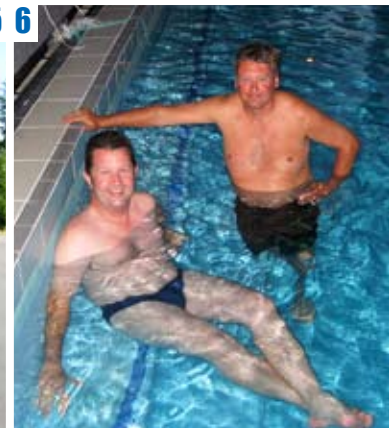
For day two local trail boss John Sinclair stepped up to head proceedings. His short shorts sent shivers down our spines, but being a longtime helicopter operator, we got the feeling John would know his way around the Marlborough district north of Hanmer Springs, where his 400km-plus day would take us. He laid down the law in no uncertain fashion in the pre-ride briefing, explaining we all had to carry cash to pay for our refuel stops where he had arranged for fuel to be trucked in. He also promised us a glorious ride up through the mighty Molesworth Station, followed by optional trail and enduro sections we would never forget. We're glad to report John proved to be a man of his word.

Big blue skies, big mountain views and big miles were all the order of day two. A couple of scenic river crossings and trail sections that climbed high into the clouds – where even the sheep get altitude sickness! – really took our breath away. This is precisely what we were here for ... too good!

But John had even better things up his sleeves for the afternoon ride home. The optional enduro split took us way, way up to a razorback ridgeline trail that was just the width of a bulldozer blade (see pages 50/51). Put a wheel wrong here and you'd take an hour to bounce all the way to the bottom. Then it would take a chopper a day to drag you out ... if it had a winch rope long enough!

"This is pure Kiwi Safari gold!" Popgun hollered as we stopped for a moment to take in the majestic mountain-top view at almost 1700m elevation.

There was no way I was going to argue. He was stating the bleedingly obvious, yet right there, right then, it was the appropriate thing to say. The Kiwis certainly are spoiled for stunning trail riding terrain.



### HAPPY VALLEY MAKES FOR HAPPY CHAPPIES

The third and final day of the Safari would be another mighty mile muncher, the course again covering better than 400km and this time taking us north-west from Hanmer Springs. The first 120km followed a remote overhead transmission line access track through a steep gorge before emerging into a stunning region covered in gorgeous Birch trees and known as Happy Valley. From there we continued to the townships of St Arnaud and ultimately Murchison via a wicked mix of highways, farm roads and little used twin-track, which included a stunning view of Lake Rotoroa – if you could take your eyes off the gnarly downhill you were riding at the time!

After another mega lunchtime feed at Murchison (lunches each day are laid on by local service groups and clubs at local sports clubs or halls – and how fresh is the lamb!), we then took aim on an ear-popping climb up to the top of Mount Murchison, which again put us up with the clouds at 1,470m elevation. It was a steep climb that in places was loose and rocky, yet the majority of the pack, including pillions and the big Beemer adventure bikes, all made it to the top to enjoy the 360 degree views.

From there it was back to Lake Rotoroa, up the climb we'd come down in the morning, across to St Arnaud and back into Happy Valley for the return route home, which was the morning's course in the opposite direction. That was fine, because in the morning low mist and fog had obscured some of the views, but now, in the late afternoon light and with clear skies, the mountain and valley views with rivers carving their crooked course all the way through were simply the sweetest candy for the eyes. The views just never let up the whole way.

### ONE MORE TREAT IN STORE: A HOT ONE!

The post-ride dinner was another mighty feed in the lavish dining room of the Heritage Hotel, during which time Yamaha Motor NZ boss Peter Payne (the event's major sponsor) thanked one and all for their participation, before Mike Britton did likewise and gave all his crew a mighty pat on the back for a job well done. It had all gone off with nary a hiccup, save for a couple of injuries and some broken down bikes. Then for many riders it was time to cruise across the road to the hot springs and take a good, long, hot post-ride soak as the Safari organisers had arranged exclusive use of the thermal pools ... perfect!

## Those lucky Kiwis are certainly spoiled for stunning trail riding terrain

### YOU KNOW YOU WANT IN!

We said it after last year's ride and we'll say it again now: the Yamaha NZ Safari ranks as one of the very best organised trail ride events in the world. Three days of scintillating riding (and plenty of it!), on a course that can satisfy riders of anything from a 250cc dirt bike to a 1200cc adventurer (with pillion!), with top-shelf accommodation, meals and back-up all included in the price, is a recipe for dirt bike riding good times. So check out the [www.adventurerides.co.nz](http://www.adventurerides.co.nz) web site and get into the 2010 Yamaha NZ Safari. You can hire a bike or ship your own bike over (like Steve Smith from AdventureMoto Australia did!) but whatever you ride, you definitely won't regret it. We'll see you there!