

Doing an (Off) Road Trip to Pretoria

This is more of a summary of a trip than a full “trip report” – simply because I do not have the time to do a comprehensive trip report. Thus in short, I had to be in Pretoria for work and instead of fly north I decided to evade the soccer masses by doing a road trip with the GSA.

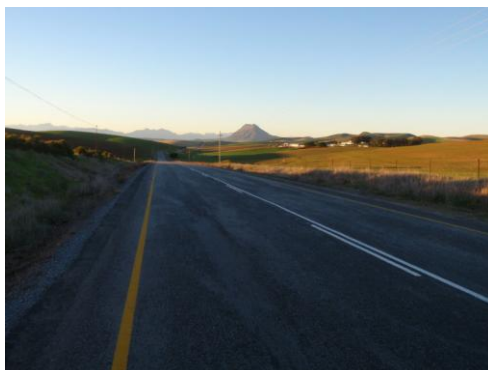


Getting ready in my garage before departure

I left in the dark on Friday morning with temperatures in Saldanha lingering in the vicinity of 1, 5 degrees. By sunrise, I was cruising through the Swartland and with no wind and the greenery of the koringlande around me I was sensing of freedom that somehow only a bike can give.



Waiting for sunrise on my way to Moorreesburg



Near Riebeeck-West



On my way to Ceres



The Mitchell's Pass near Ceres

I stopped in Ceres for coffee and to phone Wifey for the last time before I tackle the gravel. From Ceres I was on my way to Sutherland.



Wimpy coffee in Ceres



The Theronsberg Pass Near Ceres



Getting the tyres ready for gravel



The road and the GPS showing the road



Solitude! Freak, they could at least have planted a tree.



Beautiful as only the Karoo can be.



Spectacular – The road to Sutherland

It is strange how you are always seen as a target of opportunity when arriving at these small little towns. I haven't even taken my helmet off in Sutherland when a good customer of the local hotel confronted me with "‘n paar sente vir ‘n broodjie oubie". And being the Calvinists that we are, you don't just want to say f.....f. Thus, I put my helmet on and made a u-turn. I ended up in a restaurant in Sutherland called Jupiter. Visit them when you are in that area and make sure that you eat their Malva pudding. I was also confronted for the first time by the forces of darkness – individuals who buy you a dop with good intentions. The only problem is that the dop tend to become two or more and by the time you come to your senses you are contemplating staying for the night. I made a sensible decision to move on. From Sutherland the road was leading me to Fraserburg and from there to Carnarvon.



The forces of darkness



I have an interest in this river since our farm is about 100kms downstream!



Arriving in Fraserburg – you almost fit the whole town into the photo!

In Fraserburg I stopped for a Coke and to stretch legs. The gravel road from Sutherland via Fraserburg must be of the best in the country. I constantly needed to remind myself that I need to slow down – it is a gravel road after all!



Good gravel road between Fraserburg and Sutherland

There were two things of interest to me on the road between Fraserburg and Carnarvon. Firstly, I saw a rooikat (caracal) running across the road and I actually stop to watch it making its way up the little koppie. Secondly, one of the local farmers landed with his micro light on the road in front of me. I stopped and we had a very interesting discussion on how his using this little machine on his farm. Pity I didn't take a photo! He was waiting for friends who were flying from Cape Town with their little airplane. The road is used as a landing strip! Once again I had to evade the forces of darkness since he invited to stay for the night. However, I had to be in Pretoria by Sunday evening and I wanted to see the Blikkiesbar in Carnarvon. The owner, Nicky Panos an old friend, has one of the biggest (if not the biggest) collection of beer tins in the world. It is really something to see.



The Carnarvon Hotel



Watching the opening game of the Soccer World Cup in the Blikkiesbar. I cannot imagine a better place to do that.

Arriving in Carnarvon, I booked myself into the hotel and my bike was immediately taken care of by the hotel staff. If you stay in the hotel for the night, your bike automatically ended up in the danssaal of the hotel!



My bike sleeping in the danssaal.

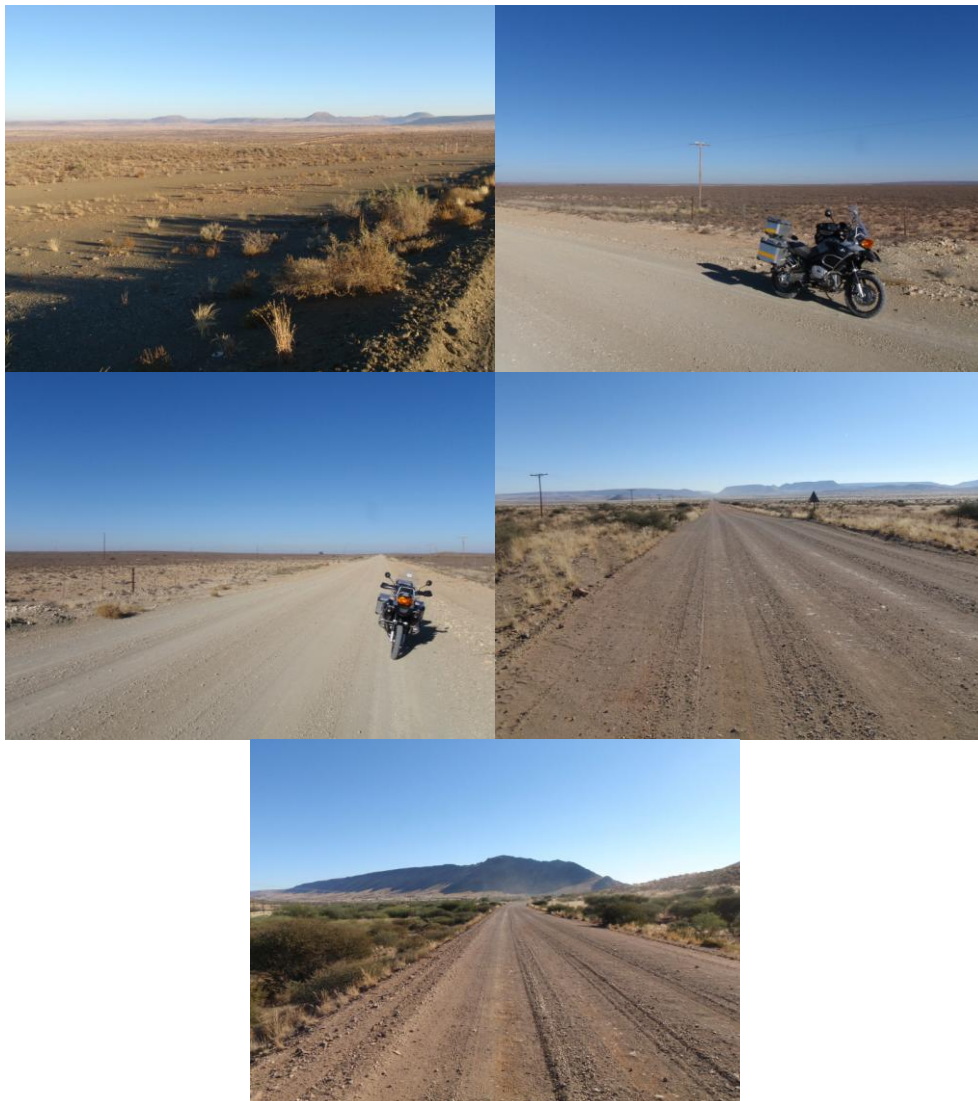
Friday night is not a good night to visit the Blikkiesbar in Carnarvon, especially if it is the opening game of the Soccer World Cup in the middle of the hunting season. The forces of darkness were at play and they made their appearance in the form of 'shooters'!

After a good boere breakfast in the Carnarvon Hotel I left at around eight with the temperature gauge of the bike telling me it is 0⁰ degrees.



At that stage I thought 0° to be cold. Little did I know!!

The 164km road between Carnarvon and Prieska isn't that good and I was starting to think about how the tyre bill of the farmers in the area looks like in a typical month.



The road between Carnarvon and Prieska.

I cannot imagine someone using this road on a regular basis without losing a lot of tyres. It is also not the busiest in the country – not a single vehicle passing me that morning. I stopped in Prieska for something hot and to enquire about the road to Douglas.



Getting my passport checked before moving into foreign lands beyond the Orange River!

Google maps and my GPS were telling me about a gravel road on the north side of the Orange River. Everybody in town was directing me towards the straight tar road on the south side of the river. I decided to trust Google maps and my GPS and looked for the gravel road. Stopping at a farm called Tasmania, just north of Prieska, I asked for directions. Initially the farmer said to me he only knows about the tar road. I showed him the road on the GPS. He then recognized the road, but warned me that there are almost ten farm gates that I will have to pass through. A farm gate has never before stopped me from going somewhere and in the end a lot of them were left open anyway. The farmer indicated to me where to turn and how to drive to take the correct route. As always, the road turned out to be an adventure on its own. It was not good and required some technical riding at times. However, it succeeded in creating that feeling of “you’re on your own” and if something is going to happen to you on this road “you’ll be in deep s...” since they will only find you next week when someone again passes here.



The road between Prieska and Douglas. Should have taken more photos on that road!

I arrived in Douglas at around 13h00. While refuelling the Beemer I started enquiring about a place to watch the rugby test between France and South Africa. A woman directed me towards a lodge some twenty kilos out of town on the road towards Kimberley. It is a beautiful place on the banks of the Orange River. The rugby turned out to be quite spectacular with South Africa giving France a rugby lesson to remember – the biggest ever score against France if I’m not mistaken.



Watching the rugby near Douglas

I left the lodge at about five for Kimberley on tar road. I had a hell of a scare when I passed two Kudu cows standing next to the road (in the 'gorrel!'). I was doing about 110. Kimberley was already cold when I booked into Guesthouse by the name of Bateleur.

Needless to say that Kimberley was freaking cold when I left on Saturday morning i.e. -2 degrees. The warm handlebars on the GSA are an absolute winner!



Entering the South African version of Kansas

A couple of observations about the Freestate. The gravel roads are bad and the tar roads are even worse. I have never seen that size of stones on any gravel road before and I have also never seen that size of potholes on tar road before. Believe me if you hit any of those stones or potholes with a bike, you're a goner. Thus, in the Freestate it does not really matter whether you are doing gravel or tar, you will anyway be doing some technical riding. But, it is not only the road infrastructure that is bad.



The Churches in Boshoff and Hertzogville

Small little towns like Boshoff and Hertzogville leave you with an impression of disintegration. The Church seems to be the only building in most towns that is not in a serious state of disrepair. Even the telephone poles are broken and in many places the telephone lines are laying on the ground. It is sad to see. Most of these small Freestate towns have growing informal settlements. I wonder how these people are surviving and where they hope to find employment.



The road between Boshoff and Hertzogville



Someone has taken a potshot at the Afrikanerbees in Hoopstad – there is a bullet hole through the glass!



Not Kansas – Bothaville in the Freestate.

I had a very late lunch in Parys. It is a place that are favoured by real bikers from the Gauteng area on a Sunday – masses of them in town.



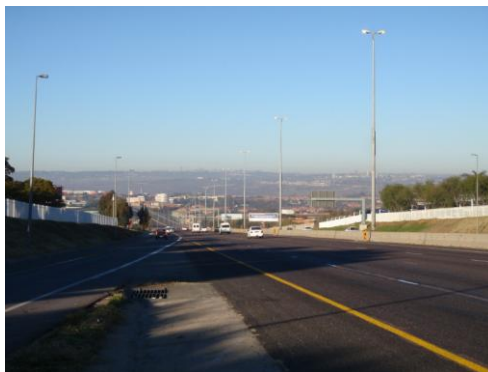
Lunch in Parys

I looked pretty hardcore between all those bikers with my cape registration number and everything on my bike showing the signs of 1400kms of mostly gravel road i.e. stof oor alles. Eventually, I arrived at Joerie's place in Pretoria at around four on Sunday afternoon.



Arriving at Joerie's place in Pretoria.

Working for the whole week in Pretoria, and confirming to myself once again I do not want to be part of that rat race, I started my return journey early on Saturday morning.



Between Johannesburg and Pretoria on Saturday morning at around 08h00.

Since I wanted to stop in the Karoo for a day, I didn't have much time to play with. Thus, the trip from Pretoria to the farm in the Williston district was mostly on tar. I took it very easy, though, by sleeping over in Kimberley and doing about 120km/h most of the time. I ended staying on the farm on Monday, helping my brother with a couple of things.



Breakfast and a trip down memory lane in Potchefstroom. We danced every Saturday night at the Impala!



The Biltong Den in Wolmaransstad is a must stop – remember the place from my army days in Potch! The West-Transvaal is cattle country after all!



Leaving the “Transvaal” behind the Vaal River!



Leaving Kimberley on Sunday morning.



I thought it was cold at -1. It ended up being -3 in some places!



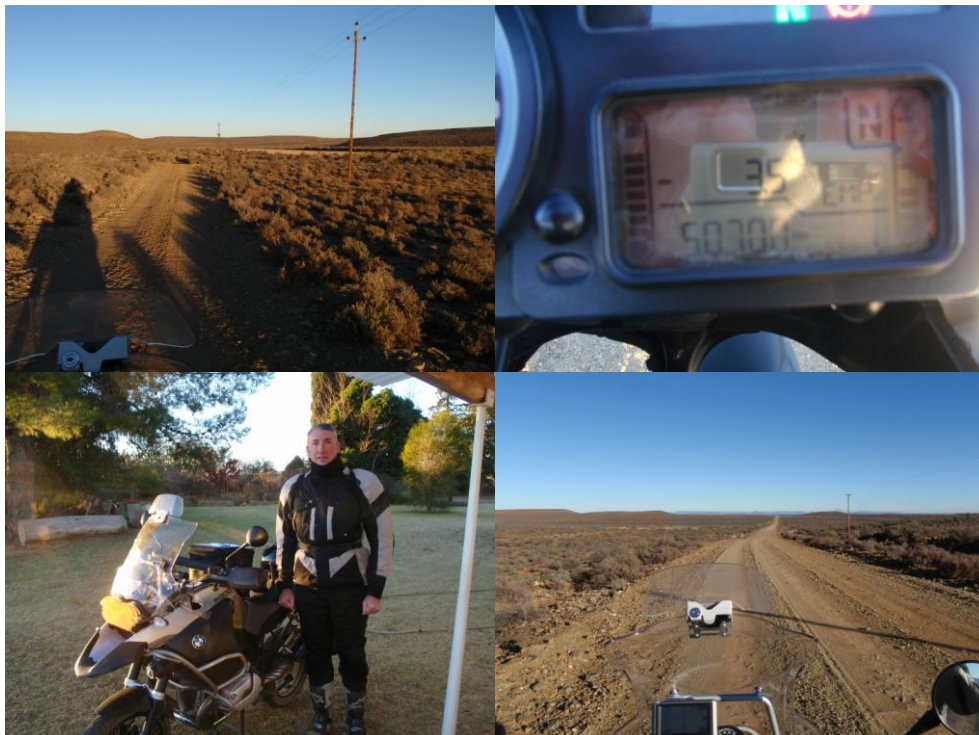
Having my passport checked – arriving on familiar ground.



I wondered what is the story behind the name 'Strydenburg'? The gravel road between Vosburg and Carnarvon.



On the farm on Monday morning



Leaving the farm on Tuesday morning. In some places it was -4.5degrees.



Pumping tyres for the tar road to Calvinia.

When I left the farm on Tuesday morning it was freaking cold at $-4,5^{\circ}$. I had a very nice ride through the Botterkloof pass from Calvinia to Clanwilliam. With all the rain of the last week, the Cederberg Mountains provided me with spectacular scenery. I was also surprised to see that the road from the English soldier's grave to Clanwilliam has been tarred in the last year.



The road between Calvinia and Clanwilliam via the Botterkijloof Pass.

At 4h00 on Tuesday afternoon I was safely back home in Saldanha.

Total distance: 3940 kms

Average fuel consumption: 16.36km/l i.e. 6.11l/100km

Extras: A bulb for the main headlight – R35