



**W**here are you from, and how long have you been on the Coffs Coast?

Only two months ago we moved to the Coffs Harbour from Newcastle. My partner, Steph, and I love the beaches and fishing that the area offers. I'm working on the Nambucca to Urunga Pacific Highway Upgrade as a Civil Engineer.

#### What is The Rickshaw Run?

The Rickshaw Run is an organised charity event where participants are challenged with the task of getting from one end of India to the other, driving a Tuk Tuk. There is no set route, nor any assistance during the journey; you're on your own. In total, there were about 70 different teams from all over the world competing; about 10 percent didn't make it to the end.

#### How did you get involved with The Rickshaw Run?

A quick internet search and a few phone calls overseas landed us a spot in the January 2013 Rickshaw Run from Jaisalmer to Cochin.

#### What prompted this adventure? Did you know much about India prior to this?

At the time we were looking for a holiday with a bit of adventure. We'd heard good things from others regarding the diverse scenery and history that India had to offer. Prior to the Rickshaw Run, the most I knew about India was the Taj Mahal, the River Ganges and the great food.

#### What is a Rickshaw? Engine? Transmission?

A Rickshaw is a three wheeled vehicle powered by a single cylinder 145 cc two stroke

engine. The design hasn't changed much since 1948. They have a manual 4 speed gearbox, with one reverse gear. Similar to the old school Vespa scooters, the gears are selected by twisting the left handgrip whilst simultaneously pulling in the clutch lever on the same handgrip.

#### There are three routes. Which route did you take, and how many kilometres did you travel in what period of time?

We started in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan and finished in Cochin, Kerala. At the end, the final odometer reading was 3,127 km; however, the accuracy of this can't be guaranteed. We crossed the finish line after 14 days.

#### How many people were in your team?

#### What relationship to you were your team mates?

We had a team of 6 people sharing two Tuk Tuks. We were 3 couples, mates from uni. At the end of the race we still managed to leave as 3 couples too. We rotated people per Tuk Tuk as we went, just to mix things up. Thanks to my fellow team members Aimee, David, Raquel, Olly and Steph for making it an unforgettable adventure.

#### As this is a charity event, who did you donate your monies too, and how much did you raise?

We had a variety of charities we raised funds for. The main charity was Frank Water, helping to provide clean water to communities throughout India. We also raised funds for Dads in Distress, Newcastle Children's Hospital & Kids@Heart NZ. In total, we ended up raising \$4,800.

#### What is 'pimped' ... and was your rickshaw 'pimped'?

Prior to us arriving, we had the opportu-

nity to submit a paint scheme for our team's Rickshaws. The local painters did a great job making our rides look utterly out of place as we ventured across the country. We also added a boomin' sound system, in order to get some local beats blasting during our trip.

#### What type of training did you have to undergo to compete?

Training consisted of a brief walk around the vehicle to see where things were and what was missing and a quick run down on how to hand crank the motor to get it started and how to flick through the gears. After that, you were on your own. Driving on the roads took some getting used to – just had to forget all the road rules you ever learnt and have your wits about you.

#### Apart from driving, I imagine there was a lot of fun to be had. What type of activities did you retire to after a long day of driving?

The usual activity at the end of the day was to fix up what had broken or fallen off our Tuk Tuks prior to setting off for the next day. We did manage to visit the Ellora Caves in Aurangabad, the Lake Palace at Udaipur, as well as the Taj Mahal. We also got to spend a couple of days relaxing on the beaches of Goa. We visited heaps of local markets and some great restaurants.

Although it's a wonderful adventure, the

#### dangers of participating in such an event are very real. What types of dangers did you encounter along the way?

Driving on the roads was the biggest risk. The scariest moment was whilst driving up a tight, windy mountain road, a fully loaded lorry truck at full steam coming down the mountain came round a blind hairpin corner, taking up both lanes and forcing us into the ditch on the side of the road. Losing brakes on another day wasn't fun either. Livestock was another obstacle we faced; a charging cow almost took out one of our vehicles whilst on the open road. Break downs weren't too much of a drama, though. All in all, we only went through 3 sets of brake shoes, one brake slave cylinder, 2 broken drive shafts, one blocked carburetor, an exhaust that fell off, a fuel tank that fell off and a broken roof frame. Nothing a roll of fencing wire and some roadside welding couldn't fix.

#### Who was your sponsor, and how did they support your journey?

I was sponsored by Laser Plumbing & Electrical, who are Australia & New Zealand's largest Plumbing & Electrical contracting group. They supported us financially, of which the funds were donated towards a charity called Frank, Water which is all about providing cleaner water to remote Indian areas.

Thanks Jason.

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