

TransScotland19 - Colin Addison - 1 June 2019

I'd completed the TransEngland and TransWales previously, and figured I was ready to move up a notch and I'm glad I did. TransScotland was the hardest thing I'd ever attempted and I will sing its praises to anyone. The scenery was just stunning, the stark remoteness in parts was mind-blowing, and the enthusiasm and spirit of the other competitors was inspirational.

Leaving Inverness I was well aware I had far more kit than anyone else but that thought soon got pushed to the back of my mind. The first day went well; good legs and good weather made for good progress and as the sun was setting on Saturday, I was descending into Applecross for Checkpoint 3. Checkpoint 1 had followed an epic stretch of gravel and the route to and from Checkpoint 2 was just beautiful beyond belief. I rode along with a massive smile on my face for all it. The Northwest of Scotland is idyllic, and the quiet, perfect roads were a joy to behold. I cannot recommend the area enough, at some points I felt I was the only person for 100 miles.

In Applecross I met some of the other riders, and together we ascended the mighty Bealach Na Ba in the dark (probably the best way, because that way you don't get to see how much uphill there is) then used the descent to gain decent momentum for riding through the next few hours. The rain then started, but our spirits stayed high. Due to a car crash, the road we wanted to use was closed so that night we bivvied in a couple of bus shelters a few hundred yards from the picturesque Donan Castle (from the first Highlander film). After a few hours sleep we got a decent start then the rain started again. It was the start of June, but it seemed to rain every hour.

The ride to Checkpoint 4 at Arnisdale was a grim wet unending slog, and I didn't think I could get any wetter. Soon out of Arnisdale we started a hikeabike section that beggared belief. The rain turned streams to torrents and none of them were rideable. The widest was about 30 foot across, a good foot deep and in the middle of nowhere; it was a weight off my mind to have dependable people with me. After some crazy descending we soon found ourselves back on proper tarmac and incredibly the sun came out. Three turned to two as Chris (a great bloke to ride with, always had a smile on his face) finally hit his limit so it was just me and Christine heading to Fort William. There we ate a massive fish shop feast before deciding to ride through the night to Checkpoint 4. This section to Dalavich was evil. Fatigue started to hit in so a powernap at a train station shelter was called for. The rain continued unabated and I genuinely thought I might get trenchfoot. Christine was so determined, and her strong form was a great motivation to get my head down and just keep turning the pedals. Early morning I started to flag and what with hearing conversations in the woods (unlikely at 5am) and hallucinating a wildcat, (actually just a heap of grit) a 30 min stop for shuteye was called for.

Checkpoint 6 didn't even seem like a checkpoint. Once we'd got on the ferry to Gourock, it felt like it was going to be all downhill to Glasgow. There was chance to rest on the crossing, the weather was good, and for the first time, I knew we'd

make it to the end. I was now just fixated on getting to George Square and the endorphins kicked in. Finally, at around 6pm we arrived at George Square and the relief hit me. I'd ridden over 700km since Saturday morning and now the finishing mindset was over, all I could think about was eating a hot meal and getting into some dry clothes.

Before the TransEngland (~300km), I'd never ridden more than 160km. TransWales took me to 380. TransScotland was just over 700. Each ride has given me more knowledge and confidence, and I've met some inspirational people and seen some incredible scenery. If you're considering riding any of them, then do it. You will not regret it.