

Tour down under 2010 – Rosie Shakespeare

Man what an event!! I would recommend this to anyone who enjoys cycling at whatever level. For sure, I will be back next year.

Shakey and I have just had the pleasure of spending 10 days in South Australia's beautiful Adelaide to watch the first Pro Tour of the year, The Tour Down Under. This race is huge!!!! We met some really good friends from Perth and hit our bikes and had a blast.



Shakey and I arrived on the Saturday – 3 days before the race started, but the city was already humming. All the riders stayed opposite the Tour Village at the Hilton and the city was set up for cyclists for the week. The cars couldn't have been more courteous – a strange feeling coming from CHCH....!

Sunday was a charity cancer criterium, and all the boys came out to play. We got to watch from our corporate box (thanks Avanti!!!) and had amazing views, It was great to see NZ's own Greg Henderson take the win for his newly formed British team Sky – so good to be a kiwi at that moment!!

Monday was the day before the race, so we hopped on our bikes and headed for beautiful Glenelg, it was so unreal to be riding along, and over the other side of the road was team Milran, Saxobank, Garmin and more out riding – man where does that happen!!! It was just so great to see all these wonderful athletes being so chilled and accessible to the public, it really made for a great atmosphere.

Tuesday's stage was from Clare in the Barossa valley to Tununda, these little towns just rocked, so full of character and life and dressed up to the nines, there was a local "Best dressed town" competition going on. We managed to get up the hill to see the riders come through, but before that happened was the tour parade, lots of free stuff flying through the air and an awesome atmosphere happening. After the boys had "flown" through, us and the other thousands of riders headed back down the hill to "see" the stage finish – man they fly through the finishing chute, scary fast stuff!!!

Wednesday was from Gawler to a fantastic week German town called Hahndorf, we got to see a great finish again, after an amazing ride through the back hills – the rides go forever, gentle slopes of only 5%-7% gradient through jaw dropping country side.

Wednesday was always going to be a hard one, 40deg on the thermometer and we felt every bit of it, fluids were consumed at a great rate. We got to see the start and ended to the finish again via an amazing hill climb –

beautiful. We came home the same way and it was like descending into a hair dryer – so HOT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Thursday we left early for our 90km ride to Goolwa a seaside town for the finish, we got there in heaps of time, found food, fluids and a shady spot and set ourselves up to see an amazing finish. The riders were so close if you reached out over the barriers you would have lost an arm!! We had organized a bus to take the 6 of us home and Pete our driver was a legend, we missed a lot of the traffic jams by short cuts including a 4wd option at one stage!! Needless to say we were back in our Air con watching the highlights while others were stuck in traffic still – go Pete!!

Friday was the infamous willunga hill, where the climbers were meant to feature and maybe take the leaders Jersey off HTC Columbia's Andre Greipel. We set off early again and after another amazing gently hill ride headed up Willunga hill, what rush, people everywhere, bikes, cars, writing on the road – what a buzz to be there. The riders came by here twice so the first time we saw the pack and the second time saw the new World champ Cadel Evans making a break, he finished fourth but Greipel fought his way back to stay in the leaders jersey.

The final stage was a circuit around Adelaide, 20 laps of a 4.5km course. Once again Avanti Rocks and got us a prime position in the corporate box, amazing views. They riders all rode around the course for a warm up and you got to see them at a slow speed, rather than a super human one which was great. Lance was hard to see, you only saw throngs of people around him.

Again Sky came to the front for the final sprints and this time Greg Henderson's team mate Luke Sutton took first and Greg came in second. Greipel kept his leaders jersey and became the second only rider in the history of the tour to win twice. Stuart O'Grady is the other rider.

On Sunday, instead of going out for breakfast, we all got up before sunrise and headed up Gorge road, a breathtaking ride; my words cannot do it justice. Just being there with good friends is a memory I will treasure for ever. Because we were so early, there was no one else out. It was really special.

To anyone who wants some great riding, and a wonderful holiday – go for it!!!!!!

