

WHAT
THE HELL IS
FINKE?

*Competitor
Information*



The Tattersall's Finke Desert Race is an off road, multi terrain two-day race through desert country from Alice Springs to the small Aputula (Finke) Community. The race crosses the Finke River, believed to be the oldest river in the world. The race is held each year on the Queen's Birthday long weekend (second weekend in June). In 2008 the event will be held from Friday 6th until Monday 9th June.

"Finke" as it is known, is now one of the biggest annual sporting events in the Northern Territory. It is recognised as the richest Off Road Race in the Southern Hemisphere with the added reputation of being one of the most difficult courses in one of the most remote places in the world.

Finke is a unique event in that it enables people of all walks of life to become involved. Rarely would you find an event that has over 400 competitors racing over a 460km course that is open to all comers, it really is the most fun you can have with a helmet on!



The race started in 1976 as a 'there and back' challenge for a group of local motorbike riders to race from Alice Springs to the Finke River and return. After the success of this initial ride, the Finke Desert Race was born and it has been held annually on the Queen's Birthday long weekend ever since.



The race is run along sections of what was the Old Ghan Railway service track adjacent to the railway line along a winding corrugated track, which snakes through typical outback terrain of red dirt, sand, spinifex, mulga and desert oaks. Even though the railway was realigned

and rebuilt in the early 80's, with the old tracks being pulled up, the race continues along its original course.

Whilst originally the Finke was only a bike race, its increasing popularity saw the inevitable introduction of cars and off road buggies in 1988.





A fierce rivalry developed between the two and four wheelers, as the buggies were keen to claim the holy grail of the race outright winner or 'King of the Desert' as it is respectfully known. For 11 consecutive years the bikes were too quick for the cars despite the gap constantly narrowing. Finally in 1999, a buggy returned home first to claim the honour. With the bikes winning back the title in 2000 and 2001. From 2002 until 2004 the buggies held onto the 'King of the

Desert' title. In 2005 the title

was changed to see two 'Kings of the Desert', one for the cars and one for bikes, each picking up \$10,000 for their effort. Although the bikes and cars no longer race against each other for the title, it is always interesting to see who completes the 460km round trip quickest.



The people and local businesses of Alice Springs are proud to have ownership of the Finke Desert Race. The June long weekend and the Finke have become an institution with outstanding community support.



For three days, it is estimated that more than 12,000 people camp beside the racetrack, sleeping under the stars in their tents and swags.

Following presentation night, where a majority of bench racing is done, competitors head home to all points on the compass. Last year, at least two thirds of the bike riders and one half of car competitors came from interstate. Multiple Baja 1000 winner Steve Hengeveld has made the trip from sunny California in 2006 and 2007, and will be back again in 2008. There's even been a team from Papua New Guinea. This demonstrates the appeal of the event and the reach it has to motor sport enthusiasts.

The Finke Desert Race is organised and run by a local committee with the assistance of the Northern Territory Major Events Company. All committee members are volunteers and give up an inordinate amount of time to ensure the event is the best it can be. Over race weekend, an estimated 300 volunteer officials will assist with the running of the event.





About the Alice...

Alice Springs is situated smack-dab in the centre of Australia surrounded by desert. Desert climates in June are typically cold at night (usually below 0°C) and mild days with occasional storms. Although these temperatures may be the 'norm' for that part of the year, there have been days when the temperature gauge has almost hit 30°C! And believe us, it makes a hard race even harder!

You're probably wondering, "where is Alice Springs?!" and "how much does it cost to get there?" Well you can use the following table as a guide (starting prices and distances are approximates):

One Way From:	By Air	Train	Bus	Distance (kms)
Adelaide	\$250	\$215	\$250	1540
Brisbane	\$350		\$480	2983
Cairns	\$350		\$400	2420
Canberra	\$370		\$360	2740
Darwin	\$290	\$240	\$255	1525
Hobart	\$450			2571
Gold Coast	\$400		\$480	3963
Melbourne	\$290	\$270	\$300	2269
Perth	\$320		\$900	3602
Sydney	\$230	\$440	\$350	2801

If you're wondering how long you would need to stay in Alice Springs, our answer would be a 5 night stay minimum. Meaning you arrive on the Thursday (day before Scrutineering) and head out on the following Tuesday (day after Race Day 2 and Presentation). For a comfortable stay you would be looking around a 10-12 night stay. This gives you the opportunity to arrive a week before the start of the Event and also means you can join in on the organised reconnaissance which lets you preview the track on the Sunday before registration/sign-on week.

If you can find the time between pulling your machines apart and putting them back together just to make sure all the bits are still there and working, you can visit the many attractions in and around Alice. There's the famous ones like Ayers Rock and the Olgas, then the Alice Springs Desert Park and the various gorges and waterholes. For more information you can visit the Central Australian Tourism Visitor Centre in Gregory Terrace while here in Alice or you can log-on to www.centralaustralian.com. You can also log on to the Tourism NT's website www.tourismnt.com.au for great 'off the beaten track' sight-seeing.



How Finke's Run...



First off, you have to enter. Official Entry forms are generally available mid February before the Event (dependent on when the Supplementary Regulations are approved). To give you an idea on entry prices, last year's cost was \$440.00 for bikes and \$600.00 for cars. To enter the race you must hold a current national licence for your respected discipline (Motorcycling Australia – Bikes, Confederation of Australian Motor Sport – Cars). For more information on racing licences you can log onto www.ma.org.au if you're a bike rider or www.cams.com.au if you're a car driver. You must also hold 100% ambulance cover and be able to produce written proof of this. If you are a Queensland resident, your driver's licence is sufficient.

Classes and Riding Numbers:

Bikes:

Previous year's top 20 place getters		No's: 1 – 20
Class 1	251cc and above two stroke	No's: 101 – 199
Class 2	451cc and above four stroke	No's: 201 – 299
Class 3	201cc to 250cc two stoke	No's: 301 – 399
Class 4	Up to 200cc two stoke	No's: 401 – 499
Class 5	251cc to 450cc four stroke	No's: 501 – 599
Class 6	Up to 250cc four stroke	No's: 601 – 699
Class 7	Masters 35 to 44 years	No's: 701 – 799
Class 8	Veterans 45 Years and over	No's: 801 – 899
Class 9	Quads	No's: 901 – 999
Class 10	Outfits	No's: 001 – 099



Cars:

Previous year's National Off Road Champion Winner		Number 1
Pro Buggy	Buggies with engines between 1650cc and not exceeding 6000cc	1-99 Number
ProLite Buggy	Buggies with engines up to 3500cc, naturally aspirated	100 Number
Super 1650	Buggies with engines between 1330cc and 1650cc	200 Number
Sportsman Buggy	Buggies with engines not exceeding 1330cc	300 Number
Performance 2WD	Modified 2WD with engine not exceeding 6000cc	500 Number
Extreme 2WD	Highly-modified 2WD with engine not exceeding 6000cc, includes Baja	400 Number
Production 4WD	Production 4WD with engine not exceeding 6000cc	700 Number
Extreme 4WD	Highly-modified 4WD with engine not exceeding 6000cc	800 Number





Official Reconnaissance – Two Sundays before Event

Due to the race track being a public road pre-running the course is only allowed to be completed on a road registered bike or car. The club has two organised reconnaissances on the two Sundays before race weekend (in 2008 they will be Sunday 25th May and Sunday 1st June). These days allow competitors with unregistered vehicles to ride from Bundooma to Finke and back to Bundooma in a controlled situation with Ambulance services. A permit must be obtained from the Alice Springs Motor Vehicle Registry for around \$40. A separate permit must be obtained for each reconnaissance. You are required to hold a current driver's/rider's licence from your respected state.

Registration Week – Monday to Thursday before Event

Your first 'official' duty as a Finke competitor when you arrive in town for the race is to register. You must produce written proof of 100% Ambulance Cover and show your current CAMS/MA licence. If you're under the age of 18 years of age (according to your birth certificate, not how old you think you are!) your Mum/Dad or legal guardian must also sign you in. The registration centre is in the Alice Plaza (centre of town) and is open from 10am to 5pm each day. If you are competing in a car and have pit crew requiring passes, they must also sign in so bring them with you to sign on - YOUR PIT CREW MUST ALSO PRODUCE PROOF OF 100% AMBULANCE COVER.

Scrutineering – Friday



Scrutineering is held at the Blatherskite Park Showgrounds in Alice Springs from 5.00pm to 9.00pm. Your machine, competition licence, and competition clothing, including helmet, gloves etc. (car competitors must also bring their vehicle's first aid kit) must be produced for a once over. If you are unable to make it to Scrutineering for one reason or another you can make alternative arrangements with the race officials. Any competitor who fails scrutineering must make a time for re-inspection with the Chief Scrutineer on the Saturday morning.

Once your machine and gear have been inspected you must then position your machine in the correct class area where it will remain impounded and on display until they are released by Officials at 9pm. Prologue start times are also given out.

While scrutineering is going on, all bikes and cars are on display, the food and drink stalls are in operation, merchandise is on sale and there is usually a fireworks display. Approximately 3000 people attend scrutineering so the place is packed. After your 'official' competitor duties are done, it's a great place to get a bite to eat, relax, catch up with mates and meet some new ones while you're at it!



Prologue – Saturday

Prologue...your first taste of Finke racing. You must complete the 8.3km track in a race against the clock to determine your starting position for Race Day 1. The track is typical Red Centre terrain with long straights, tight corners and sandy creek beds. Don't go out thinking you have to go flat chat, in the past the track has claimed it's fair amount of unsuspecting victims including bike pre-race favourites. The cars

can also take a battering with numerous rollovers and engine blow-ups! By going too hard in Prologue it could result in a Race Day 1 start time you might not be too happy with! So take it seriously and not stupidly.



Race Day 1 – Sunday

Race Day 1. You can feel the nerves just reading it! The day starts off with compulsory driver and rider briefings which are held usually an hour and a half to two hours before official start time at the Start/Finish line. You have to go to this! You must sign in and collect your start time before the briefing commences. **NON-ATTENDANCE RESULTS IN A PENALTY.**

Cars are first to tackle the 230km track with the first car getting underway usually at 7.30am. The first ten cars take off one at a time at one minute intervals. The rest of the field then start two at a time at one minute intervals.

Bikes follow later launching off 11.30am with the 10 fastest bikes (as determined by prologue) starting in rows of two bikes, at one-minute intervals. The remainder of the field will start in rows of up to ten bikes at one-minute intervals (depending on competitor numbers).

There is a time limit of 4 hours to complete the first 230km leg of the course. The Clerk of Course has the right to stop any competitor and prevent his/her continuation in the event if it is deemed impractical for that competitor to complete the course within the required time limit. Compassionate time will be allowed at the discretion of the Finke Clerk of Course. You must pass through each of the 4 checkpoints situated along the track. As a general rule, you need to slow down when you reach a checkpoint to ensure your number and time are accurately recorded – you do not have to come to a complete halt, simply pass through at a slower speed not flat chat!





There are 3 designated fuel stops also dotted along the track. Your bike must not be running at the time of refuelling. Your crew must be at fuel stops 1 and 2 before 6am on Race Day 1 as the access road to the stops is closed and no-one is allowed through (the roads are closed from 6am – 6pm on both Sunday and Monday for the event). If you do not have a crew helping you out, Finke can cart your gear (mind you it must be minimal spares like spark plugs, spare tyres, fuel, etc) down to each fuel stop and Finke.

If you intend to use this service, make sure everything is labelled clearly with your name, race number and which stop it is going to. In fact, spray paint your jerry can bright purple if you intend to refuel along the track yourself, this is so you'll be able to pick out your jerry can while your riding up to the stops, rather than having to



get off your bike, search through all the stuff and try and find your name and number! The cost to use this service is usually \$20-\$40. Each fuel stop is clearly marked along the track with 'Fuel Stop 1, 2 or 3'.

Once you get to Finke (if you make it all the way there, don't smirk, some competitors are out in the first 30km of the race!) you must sign off to let officials know you're alive and well and so we don't send out a search party for you in the early hours of the morning. Any competitor who fails to complete the course must notify one of the Official Sweep Vehicles as soon as possible! Day One times are corrected and starting times for Race Day 2 are set accordingly.



Sunday evening is spent at Finke where a race camp is established about 2kms from the Aboriginal Community of Aputula. Some 1500 people - competitors, crew and spectators - camp overnight in the race camp. The Aputula Community is a dry community which means no alcohol is allowed. You may consume alcohol in the campgrounds only!

All competitors and their crew are fed dinner on Sunday night and breakfast on the Monday morning, this service is a BBQ so if you want something that isn't cooked the traditional Australian way you'll have to have it sent down to Finke with your crew or with the transport option.



Race Day 2 - Monday



Today you'll do exactly what you did yesterday, but in reverse. You'll follow the exact same track that you went down on, so it should make it that little bit easier as you now know what to expect. Cars are again the first to leave at 7.30am and bikes leave Finke from 11.30am, both on corrected time as calculated from day one's journey. Competitors who finished 30 minutes or more after the leader will start in rows of two cars at one minute intervals and up to ten riders at a time, one minute apart, in order of their corrected day one times. Any competitor that misses their allocated start time will leave rear of field.



The return journey will be calculated at the finish to give a total elapsed time for the event. All competitors must sign off with an official at the Start/Finish Line in Alice Springs or if you do not make it, at the nearest checkpoint. Any competitor who fails to complete the course must notify one of the Official Sweep Vehicles as soon as possible! Otherwise we'll be looking for you all night long while you're having a good time at presentation – this may get you into some serious trouble with the officials looking for you!

Race day two also has the best thing about Finke...crossing the finish line! After two gruelling days of full on racing it gives you the best feeling that you've made it 'there and back' which is one of the most renowned achievements in Australian enduro and offroad racing. If you don't make it there and back, attempting the 470km track is something in itself and there's always next year!



Presentation - Monday Night

Winners take all and stories are told. A night of laughter, sharing of good times and over-exaggerated hand and arm movements! The night kicks off around 8pm at the Alice Springs Convention Centre with class places awarded followed by outright bike and car places. There is food available for purchase and the night goes into the wee hours of the morning, so prepare for a big one! Presentation night is free for competitors and pit crew.





For further info:

You can log onto:

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You can call:

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You can fax:

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