

My Shahzada Journey

Janelle Roosen and Greywood Magenta



My journey to the 2019 Shahzada ultimately started back in 1988 when my boyfriend (now husband) Paul took me to my first ever endurance ride. As a non rider I just loved watching the bond between horse and rider, as well as listening to the stories that came from each ride.

So 7 years ago on a lazy Sunday afternoon, I plucked up the courage to ask Paul to saddle up our 21 year old mare Sapphire so I could ride down the street and back with him. Paul lost his strapper that day but gained a riding partner instead.

After a few months I set myself a goal of doing a 20km ride. We breezed through our first ride and I was happy to become the 20km Queen.

Eventually I got the courage to do bigger rides. I am not a competitive rider by any means but I am a very determined rider, which I think helps in the marathon rides.

I have been blessed along the way to obtaining my buckle. I have been very fortunate to of met so many wonderful people from all over the place.

I would not be writing this if it wasn't for my wonderful friend Liz Kirk. Liz encouraged me to join her last year on her Shahzada 2018 journey. For two wet behind the ear Queenslanders it was the most amazing and gut wrenching experience. Unfortunately we were both unsuccessful in our quest to obtain a buckle in 2018.

We had not even put Greywood Magenta (aka Baby Girl) back in her yard when I informed Paul with a grin that I was coming back. The friendships and experience we gained were the highlight of our 2018 journey. Oh that and I had won costume day! My 2019 Shahzada holidays were booked 4 days after I had finished the 2018 Shahzada. I am on my way to being a tragic.

So my Tick list to Shahzada 2019 started. With the Tom Quilty being held in Qld this year. The talk of the town was the Triple Crown Series. After looking at the ride calendar I soon realised two things.

1. If I wanted to do the triple crown series. Shahzada was off the list. Not Happening!
2. I couldn't make NSW State Champs so no big 3 series either.

So I decided to do my own Big 3.

1. Easter Marthon 320km
2. Tom Quilty 160km
3. Shahzada 400km

With the Easter 320 km Marathon done and dusted. Helped along by two wonderful riding partners I gained along the way in Grayson Clark and Dean Chamberlin. Who along with myself chose to roll the dice and elevate every leg after 240 km mark.

Tom Quilty was next on the list and with the Ballard of the Quilty blaring away we started our Quilty journey. Again ridden with wonderful friends Ricky Peterson and Cindy Holden. Unfortunately our trio was reduced to two when Ricky was unsuccessful on leg 3.

Now with Quilty over with, it was time to nominate for Shahzada. So with 2 horses booked, I started counting down the days. With costumes made and the float packed, I was so excited. For Shahzada is not just about riding, it is also about the wonderful friendships you make along the way. Unfortunately Paul's horse wasn't quite right so the decision was made to leave him

behind. Even though I was sad that our duo was now solo and I could not share the wonder I had felt the year before with Paul, I was a tiny bit happy as now I had a strapper.

The day finally comes and off to Shahzada we go. After a stopover at the Highway Stables we arrive at camp full of excitement. Wondering who will arrive next. We set up camp and sort out Baby Girl. A quick walk to catch up with the wonderful Jonkers family and then back to camp to give baby girl a walk. Soon the Bergs are in camp followed by the Jones. Nothing feels better than sitting around a fire sharing stories and laughter with great friends. I feel so at home here.

Someone says they are doing the best camp this year. So Alex, Jenny and myself set out to decorate our little corner of St Albans. Decorate we did. Toilet decorated tick (who else has a care bear on the handle of their toilet and bling on their toilet), palm trees decorated tick, each camp decorated tick even the rock at the entry to our camp tick and all of it in pink. But no they aren't judging camps. But what fun we had, nothing was safe. Sorry Brad!

Soon the big day comes and we set out on the beginning of our 2019 journey. Baby Girl breezes through the days. We even got to see a real live fat wombat on track this year rather than the flat stinky ones from the previous year.

Thursday comes around and I am excited as it is costume day. Yes I am a costume tragic. We even managed to win costume day for the second time.

Now comes Friday and now I am all nerves. This is where we came unstuck last year. We set out on a dark and raining Friday morning and soon get in our chug chug rhythm and soon we are back in camp and awaiting the vets yes or no verdict. With ease Baby Girl is through and we get to go out on the last leg. We set out and both of us have had enough of the cold rain (We both hate the cold that's why we live in hot Qld). We slow down to a shuffle as we ride along. Soon it's time to head up the hill to the turnaround point. With cheers of encouragement from Alex and one of her friends, we head up the muddy hill. The front runners are coming back down and are saying words of encouragement. So we both pick up and off we go and in no time we are back down and heading home.

Across the line we go. Weigh in done now back to camp to clean up and ready for the most important vet check. I wait nervously while the heart rate is taken. Your good to go says the TPR. Hugs for her. I don't think she was expecting that. Now off to the vets. Check done and now the run out. Baby Girl glides up and back and i think YES! The vets say what do you think? OMG did I miss something?? I say a very quiet yes and with a grin a mile wide I get a YES you're through from the vets. Hugs again.

So to everyone that made my 2018 and 2019 Shahzada journey possible, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

They say Shahzada is the true test of horse and rider. But it is more than that it is also a place where wonderful memories and friendships are made. It is like family – One big crazy family of wonderful people.

