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FIXER-UPPER
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HAPPY TRAILS
AN INTREPID CYCLIST-EXPLORER

THRILLS & SPILLS
MOUNTAIN BIKES GALORE



ABOVE Caz Whitehead atop her natural habitat – a bike.

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PICTURES CAZ WHITEHEAD & ANDY ROGERS

HAPPY TRAILS

FROM FOUNDING THRIVING ONLINE COMMUNITY GROUPS TO ADVENTURING AROUND THE WORLD, CAZ WHITEHEAD HAS BEEN UNSTOPPABLE EVER SINCE SHE STARTED PEDALLING.

Caz Whitehead never meant to get into cycling. She was simply tired of Melbourne's poor public transport and looking for a way to keep fit that wouldn't involve trying to get to the gym before work. So she decided to kill two birds with one stone. But after an initial eBay bike purchase, Caz found herself "enjoying the feeling of flying downhill" and soon coveted something faster. The fixed-gear steed she ended up bringing home was shaky at first, but that wasn't what mattered. What mattered was that it was "plain white, pretty, fast and all the things I wanted from a bicycle," explains Caz. The rest is history.

"When I started riding it on the weekends, I looked up group rides to try to attend. I found myself turning up to a bike shop's road ride and being completely ignored due to my single-speed machine," says Caz. "I then came home and looked for other single-speed riders and found fixed.org (RIP), a forum where they talked bikes and hosted rides. These were my crew. They were so lovely and inviting and eventually I began riding with them all the time. They fuelled my love for the two-wheeled machines, and now, 10 years later, I'm still hooked. I still have the dream bike [that] started it all, but I've also added a couple to the collection."



ABOVE Another dirty weekend at Cudlee Creek in South Australia.



TOP Pulling up to a small town east of Hobart, Caz and her friends couldn't find a campsite. What they did discover was this cliffside and its epic views - the spot remains her favourite 'campsite' to this day.
BOTTOM Tasmania proved to have no shortage of beautiful lookout points.



ABOVE A thick fog replaced the famed views of the Zomba Plateau during Caz's spontaneous Malawi cycling jaunt.



ABOVE The first rays of light on a freezing cold summer morning at Mount Barrow, Tasmania.

It seems like Caz is prone to happy accidents, because as she explains it her founding of the popular GirlsRide! Facebook page and community was all by chance, too. According to Caz, the more than 1500-member group practically runs itself now, “mostly thanks to a bunch of absolutely awesome moderators and generally rad cycling people,” and has become a place for women to connect and find their crowd just like Caz once did. And it wasn’t just Caz’s involvement with GirlsRide! that made her a fixture in the Melbourne cycling community. Her participation in events – track riding was a natural progression of the bike she owned and Melbourne’s numerous velodromes – more specifically, her photographic documentation of them through Instagram, also played a huge part. “I used to photograph everything as I grew up, so this eventually led to ... capturing my cycling adventures when I rode. I wanted to show everyone how fun these little machines were and how far an originally

unfit and standard woman could travel on just a bottle of water and a couple of rice snaps,” Caz says. Of course, Caz has never limited her passion for cycling to Australia. From Indonesia and Vietnam to Japan and India, she’s made trips all over the world and shared the journeys through her images on social media. Her most recent trip was another one of her lucky happenstances. Off to Malawi on a university trip, she managed to duck away to Zomba for an exciting weekend of cycling. “I convinced another of the travellers to accompany me up the mountain on rusty rental bikes. There was a thick fog that increased on the ascent and monkeys jumping through the overhead vines as we rode below – where we dodged people running with bundles of saplings they’d harvested from the mountain,” Caz explains. “On the descent, we took a ‘shortcut,’ which was a jungle track that people use to access their houses. After thoroughly using the brake pads on this track,



ABOVE While the early hours may have been chilly, Tasmania's summer still offered up some gloriously sunny days on the bike.

they completely ran out for the descent, resulting in a burnt-through shoe that I was now using as a brake instead – mostly to stop and pick up mangoes from a fruit vendor or slow down for corners. When we reached the bottom, my travelling companion told me it was one of the best things he'd ever done." It was that same sense of adventure that stood Caz in good stead when she made the move to Adelaide back in January 2017. Almost everyone she first knew in her new city was through social media and cycling, so it wasn't long before she found events to get involved in. "Recently I've been racing enduro here in Adelaide, due to being coaxed into it by the Gravity Girls, and it is the most amazing time. The racing is basically like riding with your mates for a while, doing as fast a time down one trail as you can, and then it's back to discussing it wildly at the bottom and riding with mates again!" Caz says.

When asked how cycling has impacted her as a person, Caz's response is the perfect note to end on. "I'm truly a different person because of cycling. I used to be shy and never confrontational and unaware of my abilities to achieve goals ... I never would have dreamed of being someone who would plan cycling routes through paddocks in a country I knew nothing about, or teach others how to maintain their bikes and ride over rocks, or enter a degree in a field that previously would have made me tremble. I like everything that cycling has given me and I want others to find the best versions of themselves through it, too."

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