ADVENTURE BIKERIER







Multistrada 1260 Enduro

Beyond boundaries.

Don't travel just anywhere... Break boundaries with the Multistrada 1260 Enduro, the Ducati Travel Enduro. Thrilling performance is guaranteed thanks to the 1,262cc Testastretta DVT engine, powerful and torquey at any speed. The HMI interface allows for simply and intuitive management of the bike's infinite adjustment settings, which can be configured exactly as you want. No destination is too far on board the Multistrada 1260 Enduro. Exceed your boundaries.

Displacement 1,262 cc | **Power** 158 hp (116 kW) @ 9,500 rpm | **Torque** 94 lb-ft (128 Nm) @ 7,500 rpm







growing up, I always looked

at adults in bewilderment

as they exclaimed 'where has the time gone?!'. Back then, the two weeks leading up to Christmas was an agonisingly long wait, each minute feeling like a year and time would almost stand still as I paced up and down in my room 'til it was time to run downstairs and open the presents. Nowadays, 'where has the time gone?' is a regular thought of mine.

It seems like just a few months ago that we were preparing for Christmas 2018 and putting the Jan/Feb 2019 issue of ABR to bed. This year has well and truly flown by. In an attempt to re-live it, I poured myself a nice glass of whisky and set about remiat least, been probably the best on record.

A huge part of that is down to the remarkable success of the Adventure Bike Rider Festival, which we held on 12-14 of July at Ragley Hall. Previously, the largest gathering we had put together was 500-strong in 2018, so to see 2,500 ABR fans riding through the gates of Ragley was a special moment. We put a heck of a lot of work into that event, not for ourselves, but to make it the best adventure motorcycling of 2020 to kick back and plan this year's festival around for you guys.

When we decided to launch the festival. we had a clear vision for it: we wanted to offer a friendly weekend of adventure motorcycling fun. It was to be a celebration of the industry, from the manufacturers of the bikes we ride, to the guys and girls who ride them. We didn't want people to

hen I was feel like they were being taken for mugs, so all of the attractions inside the festival grounds (food and drink aside) were free, and a pint of beer would only set you back £3. Judging by the overwhelmingly positive feedback we've received, both from visitors and exhibitors, we achieved that goal.

> The Adventure Bike Rider Festival was certainly the highlight of my 2019, and everyone in the ABR offices can't wait to make the 2020 event even better for you guys. This year, it'll be held on 10-12 July, so make sure you keep the date free.

Elsewhere, I had some wonderful times on two wheels. My favourite ride of the lot was undoubtedly the Welsh Bridgestone Coast to Coast route. It had everything you could want from an adventure ride, including some lovely and scenic green lanes in Mid Wales. It seems that it was also a favourite of ABR readers as well, with the gpx file niscing. 2019 has, for Adventure Bike Rider having hundreds of downloads. If you want to get your hands on it, head to the ABR website at www.bit.ly/WalesCoast2Coast.

With all that said, it's time to start looking forwards rather than back, and I'm very excited to see what 2020 has in store for us. From a raft of new adventure bikes (read more on page 16) to ample opportunity to explore the world on two wheels (page 66), it's going to be a great one.

So, while you're taking the early months adventures, I hope you find inspiration in these pages.

Cheers

B. Davies



We're on the lookout for great adventure motorcycle features and pictures. And it doesn't have to be a 20-year round-the-world epic, we're just as interested in small road trips to Europe. Email a synopsis and some pics to james@adventurebikerider.com.



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ESCAPISM AT ITS PEAK.







AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS.

Break free with the new Honda Africa Twin Adventure Sports—a premium touring motorcycle built to take you away from the everyday. A 24.8L fuel tank and 1100cc engine let you ride further, easier and longer. Optional SHOWA EERA™ suspension control works with customisable riding modes to expertly manage damping force. A full colour TFT touch-screen and Apple CarPlay® enhance your trip experience. Stay safe thanks to dual LED headlights with DRL and Cornering Lights. And features like 5-way adjustable screen height, heated grips, cruise control and ACC charger mean you'll be comfortable for the long haul. The new Honda Africa Twin Adventure Sports: How far will you take it?



ADVENTURE BIKE RIDER | JANUARY/FEBRUARY | ISSUE 56

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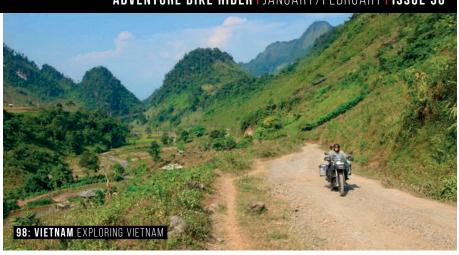
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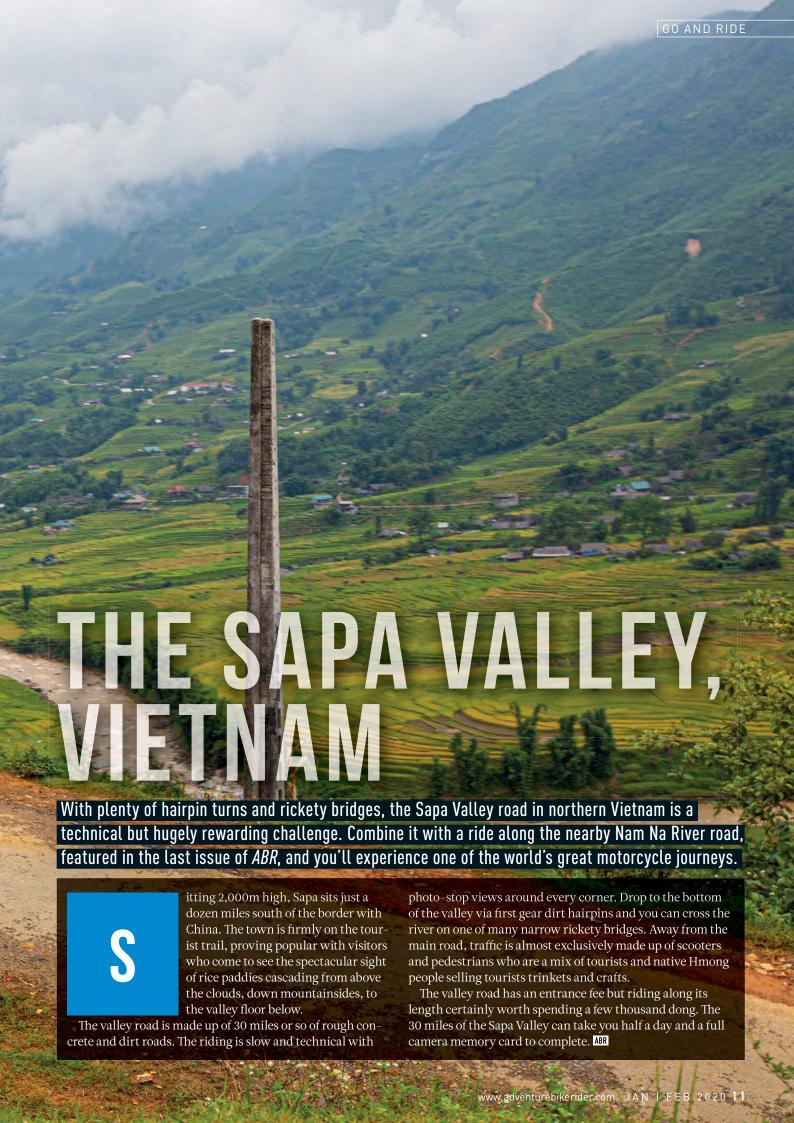


The Ténéré 700 is an original Yamaha motorcycle which are sold by an official Yamaha dealership. Always wear a helmet, eye protection and protective clothing. Yamaha encourage you to ride safely and respect fellow riders and the environment. Images shown depict professional riders performing under controlled conditions. Specifications and appearance of Yamaha products as shown here are subject to change without notice and may vary according to requirements and conditions. For further details, please consult your Yamaha dealer.











1 Jan 1

THE HANGOVER MEET

There's no better way to start the new year than surrounded by fellow bikers while tucking in to a full-English at London's famous Ace Café. A hangover is, of course, neither compulsory nor entirely recommended.

WHEN 'N' WHERE: 1st January, 10am to 5pm at the Ace Café London. North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London, NW10 7UD.

HOW: Simply turn up on the day. No need to buy tickets or pay an entry fee.

5-17 Jan

THE DAKAR RALLY

Now it's probably a bit too late for you to fly over to Saudi Arabia, let alone enter the rally, but why not tune in to catch the 42nd Dakar Rally as it makes its first appearance in the Middle East. With the course taking competitors over 4,460 miles in just 12 days, with 75% of the route on sand, it's bound to showcase the incredible efforts of those riders brave enough to tackle the infamous event.

WHEN 'N' WHERE: 5-17 January, Saudi Arabia

HOW: While following the Dakar sounds like a great way to spend a two-week holiday, it's far more likely that we'll be keeping up with its progress on TV. While no major British broadcasters have picked up coverage, highlights will be available internationally on RedBull TV or Youtube.

18-19 Jan

2

THE ADVENTURE TRAVEL SHOW

If the start of the British Winter has given you the travel blues, pop along to the Adventure Travel Show in London for a small taste of adventure. While the show doesn't focus on two-wheeled travel, hundreds of stands give you a chance to meet with tourism representatives, tour operators and volunteer services from around the globe to show you what's out there to be explored. Some of the biggest names in adventure travel will also be holding talks and seminars to give their insight into the world of adventure travel, including Zoë Cano, who has just returned from motorcycling across New Zealand. Whether you're planning your next big trip or looking for inspiration, here's the place to be.

WHEN 'N' WHERE: 18-19 January at Olympia, London W14 8UX. The show is open between 9am-6pm on the Saturday and 9:30am-5pm on the Sunday.

HOW: Visit www.adventureshow.com to purchase tickets for a price of £11 for each day or £20 for the weekend. We've also managed to bag 10% off ticket prices for ABR readers – simply enter the code 'ADVENT' at checkout when buying your tickets.

8-9 FEB

3

THE DRAGON RALLY

The title of 'four-season rider' is one worn with pride by many adventure motorcyclists. And what better way to prove your winter riding credentials than attend the infamous winter motorcycle rally hosted in the heart of Snowdonia. The rally boasts an air of secrecy, with the location not revealed to anyone except those who have had their tickets validated. Hosted by the Conwy Motorcycle Club the rally has been run since the '60s and has featured in previous issues of *ABR*.

WHEN 'N' WHERE: The Dragon Rally will take place on the 8-9 of February, somewhere in Snowdonia, Wales.

HOW: Tickets for the Rally are limited, and you may want to book now if you're willing to put your winter riding gear to the test. For more information head to www.conwymotorcycleclub.org.uk/Dragon-Rally.

14-16 FEB

4

CAROLE NASH MCN LONDON MOTORCYCLE SHOW

Why not properly celebrate Valentine's Day this year and dedicate it to the true love of your life, motorcycling! It's the place to be to check out all of 2020's new bikes and gear in the flesh or to book your summer tour. There's also exciting live racing, talks from motorcycle adventure and travel experts and, if that's not enough, you'll also have an opportunity to meet the *Adventure Bike Rider* team in person and pick up some show specials from our stand. Bonus points if you bring us a box of chocolates...

WHEN 'N' WHERE: The Carole Nash MCN London Motorcycle Show will take place on the 14-16 February at Excel London, One Western Gateway, Royal Victoria Dock, London, E16 1XL. Opening times are 10am-5pm on Friday, 9am-6pm on Saturday and 9am-5pm on Sunday.

HOW: Head to www.mcnmotorcycleshow.com to purchase tickets for an advance price of £18. Various add-ons such as paddock passes are available for an extra cost, while there are discounts for students, senior citizens and the forces.

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For more information visit www.kawasaki.co.uk

Always ride responsibly. Always ride within the limits of your skills, your experience and your machine. Wear an approved helmet and protective clothing. The actions depicted here took place under controlled conditions with professional riders.

READERS ENGAGED

ABR READERS GET IN TOUCH TO TELL US ALL ABOUT THEIR TWO-WHEELED ADVENTURES...

RIDING THE GROSSGLOCKNER

I've just been reading James' report 'An Austrian Adventure' (November/December issue) riding the KTM 790 Adventure. Concerning the €26.50 toll to ride the Grossglockner High Alpine Road, last year I toured the Alps and Dolomites including the Grossglockner, but when checking into my Gasthof-style hotel, the receptionist told me that if I was going to ride the Grossglockner the following day, to remind her when checking out about a free National Parks Pass as this would allow me to go through the toll station free of charge (the Grossglockner being within a National Park).

The following morning this pass had already been prepared with my name and that day's date printed on it ready for me to present at the toll booth, where they gave me a sticker for my bike and other brochures, all without any payment. So, if riders are staying overnight in the vicinity of the Grossglockner then it would be worth asking about this concession at the time of booking.

For me, as a lone traveller, the Taxenbacherhof Hotel situated in the village of Taxenbach, just south of Zell am See and about six miles from the Grossglockner, was a first-class, family-run hotel. It had an excellent restaurant and rooms, all at a reasonable price, and with staff who spoke good English. It is somewhere that I am pleased to recommend and where I will return to should I be riding in this area during future tours.

Hope this is of help to other riders.

JOHN GRINHAM

THE THREE PUBS CHALLENGE



What an excellent idea the Three Pubs Challenge seemed. Just to add some spice, myself and two mates, both called Paul, decided to do it in the winter. We arrived in Scotland and stayed at the Abington services on 29 November, ready to start the next morning. What a start it was at -7C. There was ice on the way up to the Wanlockhead Inn (the highest pub in Scotland) and down to the A76. All three of us survived, just.



Due to the weather, we had to miss out some of the more bike-friendly routes but we didn't resort to the motorway. We headed up to Tan Hill, again on partially salted roads, with the added disadvantages of the sun in our faces and low freezing fog. Again, we got there safely. The Tan Hill Inn was not what I would describe as a friendly hostelry. Three sandwiches took 45 valuable minutes. We would suggest you eat somewhere else and just stop here for a photo opportunity.

We had to miss out the Bowland Forest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty because the weather was still freezing and the roads were likely untreated. We managed some twisty A roads on the south of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, but again getting too adventurous with the time and sub-freezing conditions wasn't really on the cards.

As darkness fell and about half the mileage still to do, we set the SatNavs for the motorway network and the M6 to get us to north Wales. At Nelson we entered the motorway and a couple of miles on I realised the two Pauls were no longer with me. A phone call told me they were also on the motorway, just a different one! New plan - meet at Lymm services.



I arrived about 20 minutes ahead of them after they had been on a scenic adventure through Manchester. Refreshed thanks to a McDonald's, we hit the North Wales expressway to St Asaph, where we turned off to head south and up to The Sportsman's Arms. There was still ice on some of the bends and the temperature hadn't got above zero all day.

Our welcome at the Sportsman's Arms was the opposite of that

at Tan Hill. Everybody was friendly and keen to hear what us three 'idiots' had just completed. Would I recommend the challenge? Absolutely. For real enjoyment rather than a challenge, choose warmer months. There are some great roads to be ridden. We rode them, we survived them, they deserve to be enjoyed in a way we couldn't.

That being said we thoroughly enjoyed completing the challenge in one day.

You can check out a video of our ride on my YouTube channel Gatsby Biker.

ANDREW HARRISON

TRAVEL BAG





Just a quick note to say thank you for the ABR bag you gave away at the Adventure Bike Rider Festival this year. Your bag carried my waterproofs on the back of my Royal Enfield Bullet for 1,000 miles of pretty rough road and trail from Dharamshala to Manali in India, and then onto Leh, up to the highest motorable pass at Khardang La, and back to Manali. It was a bit battered by the end of this amazing trip but was with us the whole way.

Regards and see you at 2020 ABR festival .

JACKI COLE

WIN A SUBSCRIPTION TO ABR

Want to see your name in the magazine and win a year's subscription? At *Adventure Bike Rider* we love to hear from our readers, so if you're planning an adventure, want to tell us about a previous one, or just want to share your thoughts on anything bike related, get in touch!

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james@adventurebikerider.com and if yours is chosen as 'star letter' you'll win a year's subscription to *Adventure Bike Rider* magazine.

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► HARLEY DAVIDSON PAN AMERICA

Amid the usual cruisers and large tourers on Harley-Davidson's stand at Motorcycle Live at the Birmingham NEC in November, there stood the American manufacturer's first stab at an adventure bike, the Pan America. It has proved a divisive motorcycle since the first images of a prototype were released online more than a year ago. But however you feel about the bike's design, or Harley's position in the market place, there's no denying the Pan America sends a clear signal that Harley is serious about breaking into the adventure market, and those brutal looks show it's doing so in its own way. While much information, such as price, weight and range remain under wraps, we do know its 1,250cc engine will produce 145bhp, and the bike has been designed to cover long-distances in comfort by road, while also holding its own in the dirt. We've got to admit, we're intriqued.



>> YAMAHA TRACER 700

Last year, Yamaha had a huge hit with the launch of the Ténéré 700 but the Japanese manufacturer isn't resting on its laurels. It hopes to follow the success of the Ténéré with an updated version of the Tracer 700. The mid-weight adventure sports bike has proved popular since its launch a few years ago, thanks to its versatility as an excellent commuter, a fun weekend steed, and a capable long-distance tourer, all wrapped up in an affordable package. The 2020 Tracer 700 uses the same 689cc CP2 parallel-twin engine found in previous version of the bike, with minor updates. However, it's in the looks department that the changes are most noticeable. The bike has been given a sleeker front end, with new, slanted twin LED headlights providing a more predatory style than the previous model. This, combined with a less angular fairing, helps give the bike an almost futuristic appearance. Yamaha says these styling updates will also help boost the Tracer 700's long-distance touring credentials, with a redesigned fairing, updated handguards and screen.



►► SUZUKI V-STROM 1050

We've long-admired the V-Strom for its understated competence and reliability, but it's fair to say it has never been the most glamorous of bikes. This could all be about to change with the release of the V-Strom 1050. Immediately, you'll notice that rather dopey-looking oval headlight has been replaced by a vertically stacked LED hexagonal unit, which along with some other design tweaks, makes the V-Strom look tougher and more rugged. In the flesh it looks great, with Suzuki's designers paying homage to the DR Big of old to produce an aggressive looking adventure bike guaranteed to turn heads. For 2020, the V-Strom retains its 1,037cc, 90-degree, V-twin engine which has been tinkered with to provide a small hike in power from 99 bhp to 105 bhp. However, the big change comes in the form of the premium V-Strom XT model which has been packed with enough technology to bring the V-Strom in-line with its competitors. At its heart is the Intelligent Ride System which features an onboard computer controlling a suite of rider aids aimed at improving your ride. These include lean angle sensitive ABS, hill hold control and linked braking aids. Other goodies include cruise control, LED indicators and engine bars, although there's no TFT dash.



▶ BMW F900XR

BMW's all-new adventure sports bike, the F 900 XR, sits just below the popular S 1000 XR in the German manufacturer's road bike range. It will likely appeal to a similar type of road rider, those looking for the excitement of a sports bike, matched with the comfort of an adventure bike, albeit in a more accessible and affordable package. The F 900 XR actually sports the same engine you'll find in the BMW F 850 GS, with a few tweaks to increase power.

As you would expect with a BMW, the F 900 XR has plenty of technology on hand to enhance the riding experience, including two standard riding modes (Rain and Road), traction control, ABS, a 6.5-inch TFT screen, and LED lights as standard. BMW says it is looking to attract new and returning riders to the F 900 XR thanks to its relatively low seat height (825mm), as well as the fact an A2 licence compliant 48 bhp version is available. However, we reckon it offers more than enough to tempt established bikers looking for road-based fun on two-wheels.



>> HONDA CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN AND AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS

At first glance, Honda's two updated Africa Twin models for 2020 may not seem all that different to the 2019 versions, but take a closer look and you'll see a raft of changes. Both bikes have been given a larger displacement engine for 2020, up from 998cc to 1,084cc. The change seems more aimed at meeting stringent new emission rules rather than hiking performance so, as a result, peak power has only marginally increased from 94bhp to 101bhp. The frame has also been redesigned, shaving 1.8kg of its weight and now the bike features a separate sub frame. The Adventure Sports model is being firmly marketed as the long-distance touring machine of the two with a handful of features aimed at making mile-munching effortless. These include electronically adjustable suspension, a large adjustable screen, heated grips, cruise control, cornering lights, and a 6.5-inch TFT screen. The seat height has also been lowered, so the Adventure Sports is no longer the preserve of those with the inside leg of Michael Jordan. For 2020, Honda is aiming the standard Africa Twin at those who want to ride their adventure bikes off road. It's been made slimmer and lighter, with a reshaped seat making it easier to move around, as well as a stubby screen to give a better view of the trails.





>> TRIUMPH TIGER 900

The headline news for the new Tiger 900 is an increase in engine size from 800cc to 888cc. Power output from its triple engine remains the same at 94bhp, but sees a 10% increase in torque. The styling of the Tiger has also been revamped to give the bike a more aggressive stance, most notably in the sleeker twin headlights that replace the previously bug-eyed, yet very effective, beams. Other changes for 2020 include an increase in fuel capacity to 20l (up from 19l), a separate bolted-on sub frame, removable footpegs and a reduction in weight of up to 5kg depending on the model you choose. We had a long-term Tiger 800 on test throughout 2019 and were hugely impressed by the versatile adventure bike. Let's hope Triumph builds on that success with the new model.



▶ KTM 390

KTM's latest offering sees the Austrian outfit venturing into the lightweight adventure bike market with the KTM 390. The new bike uses elements of the KTM 390 Duke as its base. Its 373cc, 43bhp, single cylinder engine makes it A2 compliant and it could be the perfect bike for newer riders looking to find their feet, or those looking for a more manageable adventure offering. And while it's certainly the baby of the KTM family, those who saw it in the flesh at Motorcycle Live know the bike is surprisingly substantial for a mini adventurer. Weighing in at 158kg (dry) and boasting a TFT dash, fully adjustable WP Apex suspension, and a claimed range of 250 miles, the 390 is going to prove a tough competitor for BMW's G 310 GS and the Kawasaki Versys-X 300. And, if it's anywhere near as capable on and off road as its older sibling the 790 Adventure, it may well prove a winner.



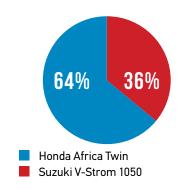
→ ABR FANS HAVE THEIR SAY

Who will win will the battle of the mid-sized adventure sports bikes in 2020 – BMW or Yamaha? And can the rugged new looks of Suzuki's updated V-Strom 1050 make it a more appealing proposition than Honda's Africa Twin. We asked Adventure Bike Rider's Facebook followers which bikes they would prefer to own.

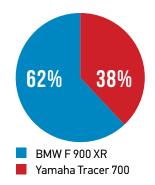


S VS

Honda Africa Twin Vs Suzuki V-Strom 1050



BMW F 900 XR Vs Yamaha Tracer 700



The Africa Twin was the clear winner in this battle with 64% of the 1,300 voters choosing it over Suzuki's updated V-Strom 1050. While both machines received plenty of updates for this year, it seems from this poll at the least, the Africa Twin will remain a firm a favourite among adventure bikers in 2020.

These two mid-sized adventure tourers go head to head in 2020 and, at this stage, BMW's all-new F 900 XR is on top, gaining 62% of the 674 votes cast. The BMW promises more power and performance than the Yamaha, but we expect the Tracer to be priced lower than the German machine when it hits dealerships. Let the battle commence.



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10 REASONS TO GET YOUR TICKETS FOR THE



As we head into the new year, the ABR team has its sights firmly set on making the Adventure Bike Rider Festival the best motorcycling event of 2020



ore bikes, more opportunities to ride, more festival activities, more topnotch facilities, and plenty more feel-good

vibes. If you enjoyed last year's Adventure Bike Rider Festival, you're going to be blown away by what we've got planned for 2020.

The event, which is supported by headline sponsor Bridgestone, is shaping up to be the most action-packed weekend of adventure biking ever held on these shores, with so many riding opportunities to choose from, you won't know where to start. Whether you're new to adventure biking or you're an old hand, if you ride solely on the road or you like exploring green lanes, there'll be plenty for everyone to enjoy. Even if you don't ride a motorcycle and simply want to hang out and have fun, we've got you covered.

Once again, the festival will be held in the magnificent grounds of the Ragley Hall Estate in Warwickshire (10 - 12 July) for what will be a celebration of all things adventure biking. Plenty of you have snapped up your tickets already, but for those who haven't, here are 10

reasons why the Adventure Bike Rider Festival 2020 should be firmly circled in your calendar.

1. RIDE THE LATEST **ADVENTURE BIKES**

Where else can you ride a Honda Africa Twin, followed by Yamaha Ténéré 700, before taking a Ducati Multistrada for a spin. In fact, you'll be able to test ride all the latest adventure bikes from the world's leading manufacturers over one glorious weekend. And, because the test rides proved so popular at last year's festival, the motorcycle manufacturers will be bringing even more bikes to ensure you get to ride as many as you like.

2. A FIVE-STAR LOCATION

The magnificent grounds of the Ragley Hall Estate proved to be the perfect setting for the Adventure Bike Rider Festival last year. It is a grade-A location set in the heart of the beautiful Warwickshire countryside, crowned by the impressive sight of Ragley Hall itself. Simply visiting this historic estate is an incredible experience. Spending the weekend exploring those magnificent grounds by motorcycle is unforgettable.

3. THE TOMTOM RIDER **ADVENTURE TRAIL**

One of the most popular attractions at last year's festival was the adventure trail that wound its way through the grounds of the Ragley Hall Estate. So, how do we top it in 2020? Well, you'll still get to ride the five-mile circular TomTom Rider Adventure Trail around Ragaley Hall, but we'll also be carving out even more miles of trails for you to explore across new and exciting parts of the estate.

There'll be something to enjoy for all levels of rider, from complete off-road beginners to experienced greenlaners. We're getting excited just thinking about it.

4. UPMARKET FACILITIES

We don't know about you, but our days of roughing it at festivals are well and truly over. That's why there'll be no expense spared on the quality of the facilities at the Adventure Bike Rider Festival. There'll be plenty of warm showers and posh toilets attended to by an army of cleaners throughout the event to ensure you can do your business in style and comfort. There'll also be plenty of glamping options for those of you who want to add a touch of luxury to your stay.



5. WORLD-CLASS OFF-ROAD SKILLS TUITION

We firmly believe you don't need to ride off road to have an adventure, which is why we design the festival for people who like to travel on tarmac, as well as those who enjoy hitting the trails. However, last year, we found many dedicated road riders enjoyed riding off road for the first time, particularly with the skills schools, so in 2020, you'll again be able to learn from their teams of world-class instructors. You'll also be able to try out trials riding with Inch Perfect Trials. So, whether you're a complete beginner, or you're looking to hone your skills in the dirt, the festival will be the perfect place to improve your riding.

6. MEET YOUR ADVENTURE BIKING HEROES

We've invited some very special guests to the 2020 festival. Some of the most recognisable faces from the world of adventure biking will be giving inspirational talks about travelling the world on two wheels, throughout the weekend. We won't reveal who we've lined-up quite yet, but we promise, you're going to be impressed.

7. LIVE MUSIC AND THE BRIDGESTONE BAR

If there's one word that could sum up last year's festival, it would be 'fun'. Some of our best memories were made after the bikes were parked up the for night and we all headed to the bar to share a few drinks and swap stories with new and old friends. Relaxing with a beer on a summer's evening in such glorious surroundings was truly special. We're looking forward to doing it all again in 2020, when we'll also have fantastic bands playing live in the REV'IT! Marquee to soundtrack your evening. And, in the mornings, there'll be biker yoga taking place to ensure your mind, body and soul are ready to ride.

8. ROAD RIDE-OUTS

While there'll be more than enough festival activities taking place on-site to keep you busy all weekend, we know adventure bikers are a curious lot, so we've made sure you'll have plenty of opportunities to explore the surrounding countryside. Ragley Hall is located on the edge of the stunning Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is littered with chocolate box villages and seriously fun biking roads.

We'll be plotting a series of routes in the Cotswolds and beyond over the coming months, which we'll feature in the festival programme for you to follow. There will also be opportunities to join group rideouts if you fancy going for a spin with new friends.

9. THE FESTIVAL VILLAGE

While riding is the focus of the festival, we'll be ensuring there is plenty to do off the bike all weekend. The Festival Village will play host to a wide selection of trade stands from leading motorcycle brands, along with entertainment, games and competitions, including the ever-popular slow bike race and welly wanging contest. There'll also be a variety of food stalls serving up delicious breakfasts, lunches and dinners throughout the weekend.

10. GREEN LANE RIDE-OUTS

Whether you're curious about greenlaning, or you're a regular on the trails, you'll be able to explore the wealth of green lanes in the Midlands on ride outs led by members of the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF). These guys are the experts in trail riding here in the UK, so the festival will be an ideal opportunity to tap into their wealth of knowledge and explore off the beaten path.

+ HOT STUFF

Ollie Rooke checks out the latest and greatest biking kit

BRIDGESTONE BATTLAX BT46

£66-£120 (Price varies on size) www.bridgestone.co.uk

What is it? The latest iteration of Bridgestone's Battlax touring tyre.

There's no worse gut feeling than the slip of your back tyre as you corner in the wet. Having recently experienced it while touring in Spain, I know how a lack of trust in your bike's boots can dent your confidence on the road. With a tour likely to take us through all types of weather, we need a tyre that doesn't let us down whatever the condition. Enter the Bridgestone Battlax BT46.

Since it was introduced 22 years ago, Bridgestone's Battlax range has gained a reputation as a leading touring tyre, coupling long life with fantastic dry handling and good performance in the wet. For 2020, the BT46 seeks to build on this heritage, offering even better wet weather performance while maintaining the high standards the range has been built on.

Both the front and rear tyres have seen minor changes, with an inverted V-shaped pattern giving you great feel at the front while a silica single compound at the rear gives better grip to stop those terrifying slides. Although marked as tubeless tyres they are also approved for mounting on tubed tyre rims and come in 21 sizes at the front and 27 for the rear to fit a full range of bikes.





MOTO PRO SHIFTER

£53.55 www.bullshiftsales.com

What is it? A bolt-on gear shifting control to turn your single peg into a twin shifter.

There's no denying it, motorcycling puts a strain on our bodies. Even as a relative newcomer to riding, mine has quickly adopted the motorcyclist's chorus of cracks and groans. Add five screws and a metal plate in my left ankle and it's easy to worry that, while I love motorcycling, motorcycling may not love me. This is where the Moto Pro Shifter comes in.

A bolt-on addition for your gear shifter, Moto Pro claims it will reduce shifting fatigue and increase gear reaction time during your ride. The shifter is designed to attach over your existing gear lever and give you a twin peg set-up. This enables you to shift up and down gears without lifting your heel off of the foot peg, speeding up your gear changes.

This should also reduce fatigue over long distances and around town, taking the strain of constant gear changes off your left hip and ankle. While we'll be testing these claims in the new year, we can see how the Shifter would minimise left leg movement and take the effort out of moving up and down the gears.

An inexpensive add-on to keep you riding your motorcycle, this piece of kit should make shifting gears as simple as possible and keep you in the saddle for many years to come.

That's the sound of raging tranquility.



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MOTO PRO PANNIERS

Full set £687.99 including frame - £469.09 Side panniers and frame www.bullshiftsales.com

What is it? A competitively-priced, full 160-litre set of lockable, water-tight aluminium panniers for the BMW R 1200 GS/GS Adventure.

While a debate rages on between soft and hard luggage, it's clear to see how the convenience of hard luggage wins over many admirers. There's little hassle in pulling up at your hotel after a day's ride and simply taking out the inner bags to head inside. And you can't beat the security of a solid metal box for your helmet, gloves and jacket while stopping for lunch in unfamiliar areas.

However, original manufacturer metal pannier and top boxes can be eye-wateringly expensive and after-market brands tend to follow suit. This is why I was pleasantly surprised to discover the competitively-priced Moto Pro Panniers.

The aluminium panniers are designed to fit the BMW R 1200 GS/GS Adventure. Locks on each box and at-the-frame fittings give you security and peace of mind on the road. A mammoth 160-litre capacity and tie-down loops provide plenty of space for you and your pillion's luggage, whether you're away for a weekend or a month.

Now, Moto Pro isn't re-inventing the wheel with this set of hard luggage, but very few manufacturers are. What Moto Pro is offering though is a full set of metal luggage, with a frame kit included, for just £687.99.

And that is pretty impressive if you've ever had to shell out on luggage and fitting frames in the past. If you're looking to deck out your bike for summer touring look no further, you can save those pennies for petrol on the other side of the channel instead.

KRIEGA OVERLANDER-SYSTEM (OS) 32 SOFT PANNIERS

£239 per single pannier kriega.com

What is it? Soft panniers designed for adventure motorcyclists. With the name Overlander-System it's clear that Kriega is targeting those riders whose tours will take them far off the beaten track. Off-road, soft luggage helps keep the weight down and is less likely to cause damage to you or your bike in a fall but can be seen as more impractical during a tour. The OS-32 looks to keep these positives while also adopting some of the popular features of their competitors in the hard luggage market.

The roll-top closure allows you to pack the bags even when they're fitted to your bike, and they expand into a semi-rigid box shape when full. If you're packing light the adjustable top and bottom straps can pull them in for a slimmer profile in comparison to hard luggage, ideal for filtering through traffic or navigating narrow trails.

The panniers can be fixed to existing racks or held in place with an over-saddle strap and Kriega claim they can be released from the bike in under a minute. While I'm yet to fit these to my bike, the large quick-release straps and buckles seem easy to use, even with gloves on.

With a range boasting a host of add-ons, including tool rolls and fuel carriers, Kriega has also added 16 hook-on points to the OS-32 to make them the ideal companion for trips into the wild.

Well-known in the industry for producing rugged and practical luggage, the OS-32 looks to continue Kriega's successful range for 2020.



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Tiger 900 redefines adventure motorcycling with quantum leaps in agility, capability and ride enhancing specification. Centred around a new lightweight modular frame, five new models featuring ground-breaking levels of state-of-the-art technology set an all-new benchmark, whether you choose to take your adventures on road or off. With a higher 900cc capacity and innovative triple configuration, the all-new engine delivers 10% more torque than the previous generation. Brakes are upgraded to Brembo Stylema calipers with suspension now refined with Marzocchi on the GT models and Showa on Rally models

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To find out more visit: triumph.co.uk



EVOTECH RADIATOR AND HEADLIGHT GUARD

Radiator £52.49 / Headlight Guard £73.49 - Triumph Tiger 800 XC

www.evotech-performance.com

What is it? Well-priced, attractive aftermarket motorcycle protection and accessories.

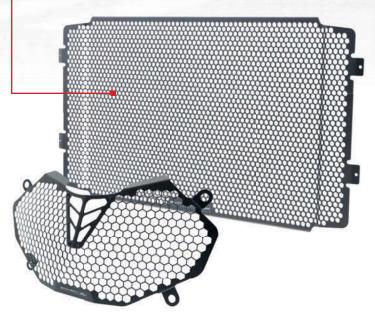
'Your bike is smoking, mate.' Sadly, it wasn't a compliment. I'd arrived at Dublin Port only for coolant to pour out of a gaping hole ripped in my radiator by a stone, enshrouding me in a cloud of steam. This experience brought home how important it can be to spend that little bit extra and ensure your motorbike's soft, fleshy bits are protected.

Evotech's radiator and headlight guards for the Triumph Tiger 800 XC are great examples of aftermarket protection, while Evotech also offers a range of accessories for motorcycles from all the major manufacturers.

Made from aluminium, they feel impressively lightweight while also strong enough to resist a stone at 70mph. They're also finished with a good-looking black powder coat that gives the bike a cool, understated look in comparison to some of the bright and heavy products that you see on adventure bikes across the world.

Fitting aftermarket protection to your bike is a relatively simple process, and Evotech's range looks to be no different. With all the included screws designed to use the existing mountings on your bike, you'll just need a screwdriver and a few minutes and your bike will be protected.

With my sights set on completing the ABR Ride Round the World Challenge next year I'm going to need some protection to keep my bike safe over 18,000 miles, and this looks to be just the trick.





BLAZEWEAR SOCK AND TROUSER LINERS

Sock liner £84.99 / Trouser liner £139.99 l www.blazewear.com

What is it? Heated under-layers for your lower extremities.

Electric blankets, hot water bottles, fluffy socks. There are a host of ways that we keep our feet and legs warm while we're enjoying the comfort of our own home. But when the seasons change and we find ourselves faced with riding through the winter, it seems that many brands focus on your hands and torso, while your lower extremities are left neglected and cold in the wind. We've reviewed heated gear for your top half later in this issue (page 140), but for Hot Stuff I wanted to take a look at Blazewear's heated gear for your bottom half.

Designed to be worn separately, or together using a splitting cable, Blazewear's sock and trouser liners run off a wiring harness that you'll need to attach to your battery. Being powered by your bike's battery you'll not have to worry about running out of charge while riding through sub-zero temperatures, and an easily accessible button allows you to increase or decrease the heat setting for the trousers on the go. The liners are extremely lightweight and they're designed to sit under your outer layers while the sock liners go over your usual thick winter socks. Indeed, you can barely feel them until the ultra-thin heating elements kick in and heat up within just 10 seconds. Even through thick socks I quickly realised what I was missing. These will be a welcome addition to your winter riding wardrobe.





t the start of 2018, four members of the ABR team challenged themselves to ride around the world... Well, sort of. In a bid to encourage ourselves, and hopefully some of you guys, to get out on our bikes more often, we set ourselves the task of covering the 18,000 miles it would take to circumnavigate

the globe (as measured by the Guinness Book of Records) as part of our every day lives.

Almost 12 months later, and the ABR RTW Challenge has resulted in a joyful triumph for one competitor, a late yet futile dash for the finish line by another, a respectable effort by the third placed man, and an abject failure for the tail rider. That's right, only one of us actually managed to go the distance, and I find myself spraying Champagne on the top step of the winner's podium alone after crossing the finish line with a few days to spare.

ABR Editor Bryn made it most of the way around the world after clocking up 15,672 miles during 2018, but he didn't quite get to the finish line. Bike Tester Julian managed to cover 7,892 miles, which would have seen him travel across Europe, Russia, and parts of the USA if he had followed the route Ewan and Charley took in the Long Way Round. However, sales guy Will, with just 3,726 miles on the clock, is floundering somewhere in central Asia, perhaps never to be seen again.

OK, perhaps that's a little harsh on Will, but I'm sure he'll be smiling reading this. You see, competing in the RTW Challenge proved huge fun with plenty of friendly banter being thrown

around the office. In fact, it's been so enjoyable that we're going to do it all again in 2020 and we'd like you to join us.

To take part, simply take a photo of your motorcycle's odometer with a copy of that day's newspaper in shot and email it to us at rtw@adventurebikerider.com. Don't worry if it's not at the start of the year, we'll welcome latecomers to the challenge. You can also post the picture in the ABR RTW Challenge thread on the ABR forum (www.adventurebikerider.com/forum). Then, as the year progresses, keep us updated with how your RTW Challenge is going and we'll print a leaderboard of the highest mileages we're sent in in each issue of ABR magazine.

Plotting our imaginary progress across the globe as part of the ABR RTW Challenge throughout 2019 inspired us to meet up and ride our bikes more often than we otherwise would have. We've had some fantastic rides, discovered new places, and met plenty of new friends along the way. I look forward to hearing about your challenges in 2020, and hopefully I'll see some of you on the road. ABR

ABR RTW CHALLENGE 2019 LEADERBOARD

The ABR RTW mileage leaderboard currently stands at:

James (assistant editor) Bryn (editor) Julian (bike tester) Will (sales guy)

18,105 miles 15,672 miles 7,892 miles 3,726 miles



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UK GREEN LEGAL TRAIL RIDING IN THE UK THIS ISSUE: HELL LANE CIRCUIT, WEST DORSET AND SUNKEN LANE, WALES Words and photos: John Norris and Mike Beddows

Green lanes featured in issues of Adventure Bike Rider...

No ABR Name/Location (see map)

- Kiln Bent/Ramsden Road (W Yorks)
- 2 Stanage Edge (Peak District)
- Salter Fell (Lancashire) 3 10
- Wavfarer Trail (North Wales) 4 10
- 5 Rowland (Peak District) 11
- 6 11 Sarn Helen, Betws-y-Coed (Wales)
- 7 Strata Florida (Mid Wales) 12
- Corwen Car Wash (North Wales) 8 12
- 9 12 Winton (Cumbria)
- 10 13 Old Coach Road (Lake District)
- Sarn Helen (South Wales) 11 13
- Beginner's Loop (The Cotswolds) **12** 14
- Rudland Rigg (North Yorkshire) 13 15
- Three Shires (The Peak District) 14 15
- **15** 16 Farm Trails (North Yorkshire)
- Pant Lane Farm (Mid Wales) 16
- 17 17 Mynydd Bach (Brecon Beacons)
- Little Langdale (Lake District) 18 17
- Askam in Furness Coastal Trail (Cumbria) 19 18
- **20** 18 Macmillan Way (Gloucestershire)
- 21 19 Fosse Way (Somerset)
- **22** 20 Stalling Busk (Yorkshire Dales)
- 23 21 Bwlchy Groes (North Wales)
- The Highway (Yorkshire Dales/Cumbria) 24 21
- **25** 22 Claerwen Reservoir (Mid Wales)
- **26** 22 Cyffylliog Trails (North Wales)
- **27** 23 Kings Lynn, Hunstanton (Norfolk) **28** 25 Chatsworth & Two Dales (Peak District)
- 29 25 Kirkby Stephen Trails (Cumbria)
- Golf Links (Rhayader)

- 31 26 Four of North Kent's byways (Kent)
- **32** 27 Alcester Trails (Warwickshire) **33** 27 A Trip Around Vigo Village (Kent)
- **34** 28 Llwybr Ceiriog Trail (North Wales)
- **35** 28 Toft Hill Trail (North Yorkshire) **36** 29 Breasthigh Road (Cumbria)
- **37** 29 Four More Kent Byways (Kent)
- **38** 30 Coast to Coast
- Pheasant Penn Steps (North Wales) **39** 31
- 40 31 Harrop Edge (West Yorkshire)
- 41 32 Holmfirth Trails (West Yorkshire)
- **42** 32 Settle Trails (North Yorkshire)
- **43** 33 Settle Trails, Part 2 (North Yorkshire)
- Glaisdale Rigg (North Yorkshire) 44 33
- 45 3/ Masham Moor (Yorkshire)
- 46 34 Stonehenge (Wiltshire)
- **47** 35 Bwlch Y Rhiwygr (Wales)
- **48** 35 Salisbury Trails (Wiltshire)
- Roman Road (Yorkshire Dales) 49 36
- **50** 36 Rivington Pike (West Pennines)
- **51** 37 Inmoor Lane (Yorkshire Dales)
- **52** 37 Danby Beacon (Moorland Tracks)
- **53** 38 Charity Lane, Macclesfield Old Rd (Peak District)
- **54** 38 Thurrish Lane (West Yorkshire)
- **55** 39 Llwybr Ceiriog Trail (North Wales)
- **56** 39 Whitestones and Hafod Adams (North Wales)
- 57 40 Salisbury Plain (Wiltshire)
- **58** 40 Shropshire Trails (Shropshire)
- **59** 41 Butser Hill (South Downs)
- 60 41 Long Mynd (Shropshire) Ashley Down/Parnhold Wood (Hampshire) 61

- **62** 42 Lower Claerwen (Mid Wales) **63** 43 Horndean (Hampshire)
- **64** 43 Llwybr Ceiriog extension (North Wales)
- **65** 44 Clwydian Hills (North Wales)
- 66 44 Hexham Lane (County Durham)
- **67** 45 Offas Dyke (Shropshire) 68 Slaley Forest (Northumberland)
- 69 46 Foxton Lane (North Yorkshire)
- **70** 46 Berkshire Downs
- 71 47 Back Lane / High Lane (Yorkshire Dales)
- **72** 47 Lambourn Downs (Oxfordshire)
- **73** 48 Houndkirk Moor (Peak District)
- **74** 48 Malpas Lanes (Cheshire)
- **75** 49 Cheshire Lanes (Cheshire) 76 /9
- Clun Lanes (Shropshire)
- **77** 50 Soar y Mynydd (Mid Wales)
- **78** 50 Ughill Moor (South Yorkshire)
- **79** 51 Cadair Idris (North Wales)
- 80 51 Teignmouth (Devon)
- 81 52 Happy Valley (North Wales) **82** 52 Mold Trails (North Wales)
- **83** 53 Dawlish (Devon)
- **84** 53 Water Breaks Its Neck (Mid Wales)
- 85 54 Littleton Drew (Wiltshire)
- 86 54 Kemble (Gloucestershire)
- **87** 55 Dolgellau (North Wales)
- 88 Salisbury Whoops (Wiltshire)
- **89** 56 Hell Lane (West Dorset)
- 90 56 Sunken Lane (South Wales) >



89 HELL LANE CIRCUIT, WEST DORSET

orset is a fabulous area to explore by green lane, although there are fewer here than in nearby counties.
The lanes themselves are varied,

including hard, stone tracks, muddy stream beds, and overgrown wild flower-lined single track. There are routes suited to adventure bikes and some probably best tackled on something lighter and more agile.

The great thing about Dorset is the roads connecting the sometimes short green lane routes are a delight in themselves, often only just qualifying as tarmac roads. Hell Lane, featured in this route, is one of many beautiful holloways (ancient sunken tracks) found in Dorset. The track has been cut several metres deep into the ground from horse and carts pulling limestone out as far back as the

14th century. The stone was used to build St John The Baptists church in Symondsbury where our route starts and finishes.



THE FACTS

DISTANCE:

NEAREST TOWN:

Bridport

MAPS:

Explorer 116 Lyme Rgegis and Bridport

START/END Grid reference:

Circuit ride from SY 445 935

DIFFICULTY RATING:

3 (Hell Lane descent 4 but variable subject to recent rain)

WOW FACTOR:

4

OTHER TRAILS:

Two short trails starting from around SY 414 963

1-2

Start at the church in Symondsbury, near Bridport. There is a track going uphill from the signpost marked as a dead end. Ignore the red and white road closed signs put there by disgruntled ramblers who frequent the lane. Continue up past a small holding and on into the deep gorge, which features carvings in the orange stone. Pass a fork coming in from the left to a crossroads at the crest.

2-3

Take the lane straight ahead that drops away into a wooded sunken track. This would be the stretch that all but experienced off roaders would struggle with on a large adventure bike. The going down here gets very deeply rutted at times and is pretty slippery and tricky after rain. There are some more intriguing carvings in the rock along the way and, in midsummer, you have to duck the branches and brambles. Pass through the double gate straight on and ride out through the stream bed past a farm on the left, to a tarmac lane. Bear left at the Hell Lane sign.

3-4

Go straight ahead at the next junction and, shortly after, ignore the right hand turn to Venn Farm, instead fol-

lowing the lane left and down to where the track goes out into an open field. Follow the rising traverse across the field and past Butt Farm on your left where you join a gravel track to Ryall village. Here you pick your way left on onto a tarmac road.

4-5

Just as you leave the village, there is a stony track on the right climbing back on yourself. This is a cut through to Morecambelake road that goes anticlockwise around Hardown Hill to the A35 major road.

5-6

Go straight across the A35 and, after a few metres, take the left-hand fork following a nice stretch of track just east of Charndown Hill. Hang a left at the next junction onto Muddyford Lane dropping down and then up towards the A35. Just before the main road turn right towards the National Trust car park at Langdon Hill.

Near the carpark, hang a left onto a rough track (Langdon Lane) that skirts the east of Langdon Hill and then bear left onto Petticrate Lane. After a few metres you have two choices, I prefer the right fork. When you reach tarmac you can detour right to a fine pub right by the beach and the perfect place for a break

and even a swim. The Anchor Inn sells local Palmers real ale and superb fresh seafood as well as coffee etc. Go back up Sea Hill Lane to Chideok and turn right onto the A35.

6-7

Watch out for the speed camera leaving the village and carry on to the top of the hill, being careful not to miss the left hander at the crest. Follow the tarmac stretch to a lovely section of trail back to the climb you did up from Symondsbury.

Take the sharp right back down through the gorge to the finish in Symondsbury where you started.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

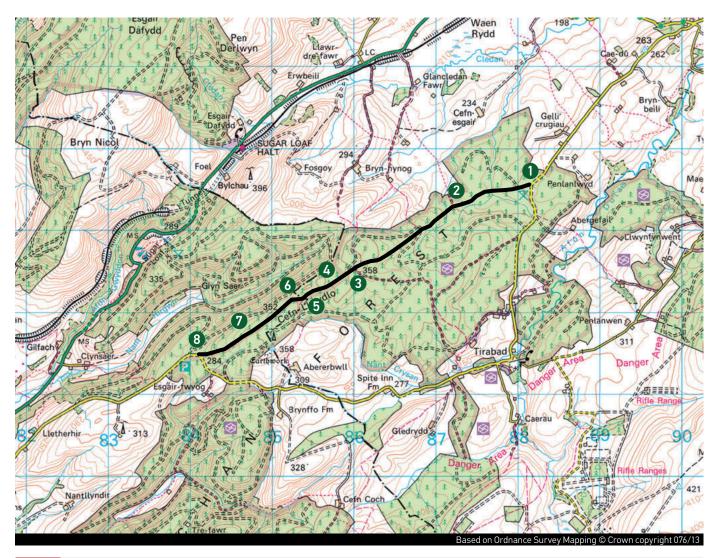
A) At point 2, you can explore a nice track leading off to the right towards Henwood Hill. It is an easy return detour but eventually closes down into thick brambles. On your return you could then descend Hell Lane to your right.

B)If you are apprehensive about the slippery descent between point 2 and 3 due to wet weather or being on heavy bike, you can turn left at point 7 towards the A35 and follow the main road to Chideock turning right at point 6 towards North Chideock, and rejoining our route by turning left at the T junction near point 3.









SUNKEN LANE, WALES

his is a fantastic lane if you like deep water splashes, and by deep, I mean probably the deepest a bike can navigate without suffering serious damage. If you don't like getting wet, this isn't the trail for you.

Sunken Lane makes a fantastic addition to the trails in mid Wales. Whilst riding, I couldn't help but compare it to the Strata Florida and its many river crossings located just 15 miles away. Ok, so Sunken Lane may not have rivers, but the puddles are just as wide and probably deeper. With this in mind, be wary of doing this trail solo. If you bin it in one of the 'puddles', there could be serious consequences.

The only issue I have with this trail is the four-wheel-drive damage caused by drivers going around the puddles. This is creating bypass routes which may initially seem appealing to you water dodgers out there but be under no illusion that these are easy bypasses. They are deep mud and rutty. Far

easier to simply ride through the puddles. Why 4x4s insist on going around is beyond me. Stick to the legal route.

If you like riding along the Trans Euro Trail (TET), take note of where this green lane is. While it's not currently on the TET, with a bit of forward thinking you can easily divert to this trail, and then back onto the TET with minimal effort.



THE FACTS

DISTANCE: 3 miles

NEAREST TOWN:

Llandovery

MAPS:

Explorer 187 Llandovery

START/END

GRID REFERENCE: SN882436 / SN841415

DIFFICULTY RATING:

WOW FACTOR:

OTHER TRAILS:

This trail is slap bang in the middle of some of Wales' favourite trails, such as the Strata Florida and Roman Road a few miles to the South. It is a great location.

1-2

Head over the cattle grid and into the forest. You will follow a well-maintained graded forest track for this first section. Take care as it's easy to pick up speed and this route is more than likely used by forestry traffic.

2-3

You will know when you reach point two. The obvious routes to the right and left have signs stating that you should not proceed. The legal off-road route ahead is the only option. I say ahead, but it really loops towards the left and proceeds uphill. This is where this route really starts to get good. After a muddy start at the entrance, the track becomes rockier with loose stones as you proceed uphill. There are some muddier sections with some standing water but for the most part it's pretty solid at this stage. There are occasional ruts and washed out bits. It really is lovely riding. You are riding through the forest but you are not enclosed due to the newer trees at the side of the trail, with the bigger, more established trees further away.

3-4

This is the best part of the trail. Do not proceed past this point unless you like deep water splashes. Pass a turning to the left, and then one that appears to join from the right shortly after. Stay as straight as possible and you will stick on the route.

With stops, from here to the end takes about eight minutes to complete. There are some loose stones, but for the most part, it is a straightforward gravel track. The standing water starts to become more apparent but these are just minor puddles compared to what's about to come. The first large puddle soon looms and this one is the only one that I'd class as OK to go around. This is because the track appears to split. You have the option of either the water route or the bypass track which isn't a muddy mess as the rest are. You will later see more evidence of off-piste 4x4 tracks in this area. Stick to the track.

4-5

Another track joins from the left. Keep going straight. The next puddle has a muddy cheat route going around it. I'd say, it's easier just to proceed through the water.

5-6

As the trail heads around to the right, the deepest crossing comes into view. This is the longest and deepest puddle on the route. Once again, there's a very messy off-piste route to the left, but if you commit to the puddle there will be no issues. Don't get me wrong, this is about knee to thigh deep (and I've got long legs). Just stick to one side, I went left, and don't try to change ruts half way across.

6-7

A bit of more exposed bedrock starts to appear. At the next puddle, stay on track and head through it. Do not go around (four-wheel drive vehicles will eventually get this lane closed, I'm sure of it). From here, the puddles get easier and shallower than the previous few.

7-8

From here on, the standing water is just bigger puddles and after a while its clear of water right to the end of the trail.















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AMAZING BRITAIN

SOUTHERN ENGLAND

James Oxley discovers the hidden treasures of the Cotswolds on the first TomTom Amazing Britain route



'm pleased to welcome you to the first ABR and TomTom Amazing Britain route. Throughout 2020, we'll be teaming up with TomTom to produce a series of six rides across the UK and Ireland that are linked together by fascinating, quirky, awe-inspiring and sometimes downright ridiculous places just waiting be discovered. And, as always, we'll be seeking out fantastic roads that link them together to create a selection of superb rides you'll be talking about down the pub for years to come.

We'll be creating routes in Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and splitting England in half with a northern and southern ride.

We'll also be asking you guys to create your own route, the best of which will be ridden by the *ABR* team and featured in a future issue of the magazine (you can find out more about how to enter on page 42).

Our first route covers southern England, and it's a 190-milelong ride through the Cotswolds that'll take you to a number of fascinating locations. Starting in Stratford-upon-Avon, the route winds its way south, through the Cotswolds and the North Wessex Downs before coming to an end in the beautiful city of Bath. Rideable in a day, it's the perfect antidote for a glum weekend. So, let's get to it! ▶

TOMTOM Plug these waypoints into your Sat Nay to follow. as near as dammit, the ABR and TomTom Amazing Britain: Southern England route. It's also available to download as a gpx. file so that you can stick it straight into your device without the hassle of thumbing in a new stop every so often. Simply head to www.bit.ly/ABRrouteSouthern and your download will be waiting for you. Alternatively, scan the QR code below with your smartphone and you'll be taken to the TomTom Road Trips portal Shakespeare's 6. St Martin's Church, OX20 1RS birthplace, Stratford-upon- 7. **Bourton** on the Avon, CV37 6QW Water, GL54 2AP Touchdown Café, 8. Chedworth Wellesbourne, Roman Villa, CV35 8EL (via the GL543LJ B4086) Uffington White

М5 TOUCHDOWN CAFÉ SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE 1 **BURTON DASSETT** 4 EDGEHILL Evesham Banbury A46 **BROADWAY TOWER** Tewkesbury M40 Bicester Gloucester CHEDWORTH ROMAN VILLA ST MARTIN'S CHURCH Oxford (Stroud M5 Malmesbury **UFFINGTON WHITE HORSE** Swindon М4 Chippenham 11 BATH



6DJ

Burton Dassett

Hills Country

The Castle at

WR127LB

Edgehill, 0X15

Broadway Tower,

Park, CV47 2AB (via the B4100)

DOWNLOAD THIS ROUTE NOW

Horse, SN7 7QJ

Avebury, SN8

Bath, BA1 1EB

(on-street

motorcycle

parking bay

close town

centre)

Scan the QR code and add this route to your TomTom device





1. Visit Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon

We begin our TomTom Amazing Britain route at the birthplace of one of the greatest Britons ever to have lived, the playwright William Shakespeare. The half-timbered house stands on a pedestrianised street in Stratford's old town so you'll need to park the bike before taking a stroll to the birthplace of the Bard. You can walk in Shakespeare's footsteps by visiting the house through the visitor centre next door or, if you're itching to get riding, grab a coffee from the café opposite, sit outside and soak up your surroundings before hitting the road. Stratford-upon-Avon itself is a picturesque Shakespeare-themed town, and it's well worth sparing the time to take a stroll through its quaint streets to the River Avon.

2. See a Vulcan Bomber at the Touchdown Café on Wellesbourne Airfield

You'll need a decent breakfast to fuel yourself for the day ahead, so take a ride through Stratford and along some gloriously twisting country roads to Wellesbourne Airfield. Nestled on the edge of the airfield is the Touchdown Café which serves up a cracking full–English and is a popular spot with local bikers. While the breakfast is pretty spectacular, the amazing sight at this stop is the Vulcan Bomber parked up at the airfield. The incredible











delta-wing aircraft was part of Britain's nuclear deterrent during the Cold War and is one of only a handful that survive today. The aircraft no longer flies, but if you're lucky you'll arrive on a day when it is being taxied up and down the runway at speed by enthusiasts. The deafening roar of this magnificent machine in action is truly an amazing sight and sound.

3. Imagine dinosaurs roaming from the lookout at Burton Dassett

A short ride from Wellesbourne Airfield is Burton Dassett Country Park. Wind your way up the narrow entrance road, turn left at the top, before parking in the car park underneath the medieval lookout beacon. Take a stroll up to the beacon and survey the spectacular view of the countryside you've ridden through. The hills you stand on were formed during the Jurassic period some 200 to 400 million years ago when the area was a sub-tropical sea. To the south east, experts have found evidence of an island where dinosaurs would have roamed. After you've let your imagination run wild, saddle up and head south for a date with more recent history.

4. Stand on the site of the first battle of the English Civil War

In 1642, King Charles I's Royalist army met Parliamentarian forces head on in the first major battle of the English Civil War. The battle was, in essence, a draw, with neither force scoring a resounding victory, but it did leave the Royalist forces in command of the all-important road to London, upon which they later marched. Our route stops at Radway Tower, now home to the Castle Inn pub and restaurant. The distinctive tower was built 100 years after the battle overlooking the field of conflict, with some saying it marks the spot where King Charles raised the Royal Standard before the two armies clashed. The site is a fascinating slice of British history and it is certainly worth spending a few minutes reflecting on the events that led to Englishman facing Englishman on a bloody field of battle.

5. Experience British eccentricity at its best at **Broadway Tower**

If there's one thing us Brits have a knack of doing well it's eccentricity, and in Broadway Tower we have a fine example of the British penchant for doing things marvellously differently. This folly was built by 18th century designer Capability Brown and features a mish mash of turrets, gargoyles, battlements and balconies perched high upon a site that gives you a view of 16 counties on a clear day. The tower has become a landmark in the Cotswolds and attracts visitors year-round. You can park up and take a walk inside or simply marvel at the rather unexpected site of an 18th Century folly proudly overlooking the English countryside. Just to add to the sense of the unexpected, there is also a Cold War-era nuclear bunker to explore on the site. ▶









6. Pay your respects at the grave of Sir Winston Churchill

We began this TomTom Amazing Britain route at the birthplace of one of the UK's greatest Britons and, at this stop, we take a few moments to pay our respects to another. After making our way along some wonderfully twisting lanes and past the grounds of Blenheim Palace, we arrive at the village of Bladon. Take a sharp left off the main road up to St Martin's Church, park up your bike, and stroll through the churchyard to the grave of Sir Winston Churchill. The former prime minister, who led Britain to victory in World War II, was given a state funeral at St Paul's Cathedral in London before a private burial was held at St Martin's Church, the resting place of his parents, children and wider family. It's an understated location for a world leader of his stature, but also rather apt that, after a life influencing tumultuous world affairs, Sir Winston chose the quiet English village close to home as his final resting place.

7. Visit the Venice of the Cotswolds at Bourton-on-the-Water

Leaving Broadway Tower behind, we delve deep into the Cotswolds, riding along meandering B roads and through chocolate box villages looking like they're straight from a Hollywood film set. For me, this part of the country typifies the poet William Blake's famous phrase 'In England's green and pleasant land' better than any other. Upon arrival in Bourton-on-the-Water, you'd be forgiven for thinking you are in just another charming Cotswolds village. However, once you spy a river threading its way through the village under a series of low arched stone bridges dating back as early as 1654, you'll soon realise why it's called the Venice of the Cotswolds. It's a rather beautiful and slightly surreal experience walking through this picturesque village. I could have easily spent the afternoon exploring its nooks and crannies, but with plenty of miles still to cover, I wolfed down a battered sausage and chips from De la Hayes (highly recommended) and headed deeper into the Cotswolds for a date with the Romans.

8. Explore one of Britain's grandest Roman villas

We jump back on the Fosse Way, a seemingly arrow-straight Roman road that, for a time, marked the frontier of Roman rule in Britain. A few miles further on we turn off, directed by the signs for Chedworth Roman Villa before following a fantastic single-track road with views of the surrounding countryside. Unfortunately, the Roman villa was closed when we arrived and won't reopen until 8 February, but it was worth the visit to ride the road there and back. If you do arrive when the National Trust property is open, you'll get to explore the remains of one of the grandest Roman villas in Britain. It was first discovered by the Victorians some 150 years ago with a wide variety of historical treasures unearthed since then, providing a fascinating insight into Roman life.



UFFINGTON DRAGON HILL





CREATE YOUR OWN TOMTOM AMAZING **BRITAIN ROUTE**

As part of the TomTom Amazing Britain series, we're asking ABR readers to create their own route and send it in to us. We'll select the best submission, ride it, and then feature it in the magazine. As is the case with all the TomTom Amazing Britain routes, yours will need to be in the UK or Ireland, be rideable in a weekend, and must feature a series of fascinating, quirky, awe-inspiring, or downright ridiculous places to stop at and explore. So, if you've got a favourite ride you think others will love, plot it on the TomTom Road Trips portal at www.tomtom.com/roadtrips, publish the route to the community, and send the link of your marvellous ride to james@adventurebikerider.com. We look forward to seeing it!

9. View Uffington White Horse and where St George slayed the dragon

After Chedworth Roman Villa, we turn south and leave the Cotswolds behind, cruising along country lanes without hedges so you can see the road and landscape unfurl ahead. This stretch is a gloriously relaxing ride until we pick up speed on the A361. Just past the village of Woolston, we ride up to the sight of Uffington White Horse. This chalk figure cut into the hillside is thought to be more than 3,000 years old. It's located next to Uffington Castle, an Iron Age hillfort, and close by is Dragon Hill with its distinctive flattened top. This is where legend says St George, the patron saint of England, was supposed to have slayed the dragon. To get a view of Uffington White Horse, park in the National Trust car park and take a stroll along the path. Alternatively, you can ride right under the white horse along Dragon Hill Road which, as you may expect, gives you a great view of Dragon Hill. To do so, ride past the car park until you come to a sign for the Ridgeway, which is Britain's oldest road. Sections of the Ridgeway can be ridden by motorcycle, but a sign forbade us from exploring this section when we were there. Turn left at the junction, go past the blue badge holder car park and you'll find yourself on Dragon Hill Road.

10. Stand within one of the greatest marvels of prehistoric Britain at Avebury

Our route now turns west along more sublime twisting B roads through the North Wessex Downs until we reach Avebury, the site of the world's largest prehistoric stone circle. Handily, there is a pub called the Red Lion sat slap-bang in the centre of it, so park up, get yourself a lemonade and a packet of crisps and explore this ancient site. Alternatively, see some of the stones from the roadside, or follow the signs to the National Trust car park and stretch your legs amongst the stones. Avebury henge and its stone circle have been described as one of the greatest marvels of prehistoric Britain. They are thought to have been created around 2,850 BC as a ceremonial site that is believed to have been used for rituals, as a sacred meeting place, and for pagan worship.

11. Explore the most beautiful city in Britain

OK, so there are a few cities that could lay claim to being Britain's most beautiful, but it'd be hard to argue that Bath doesn't deserve a spot close to, if not at the top of, the list. This stunning example of Georgian architecture nestled within the Somerset hills is a sight to behold, with the whole city being named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its crowning glory is the magnificent Bath Abbey located next to the grandeur of the Roman Baths. You could spend days exploring the warren of streets lined with buildings made from distinctive Bath stone, including the impressive Royal Crescent. For us, the city marks the end of this TomTom Amazing Britain route. I'd recommend staying overnight and enjoying a couple of drinks to celebrate a great day's ride. And remember, Somerset is cider country, so there are plenty of local varieties on offer. I enjoy the cider tasting board at The Stable in Kingsmead Square, which has 50 ciders to choose from and also serves up cracking pizzas. I can't think of too many better ways to end a great day in the saddle. ABR



TED SIMON

40 years after the publication of *Jupiter's Travels*, author and Godfather of adventure motorcycling **Ted Simon**, speaks to **James Oxley** about the impact one man's story of riding solo around the world has had on generations of motorcyclists.



old when my dad handed me his first edition copy of Jupiter's Travels. He'd bought the book one lunchtime

back in 1979, the year it was published. Money was tight in those days and my dad later joked he'd spent his lunch allowance for the entire week on the hardback. Despite the hunger that followed, Ted Simon's account of his four-year journey around the world on a Triumph Tiger proved a wise purchase. It won pride of place on my family's bookshelves, undergoing multiple reads and inspiring my dad's own motorcycle journey to Europe.

He couldn't have known back then that, more than a decade later, he would pass on that first edition to his as yet unborn son. It's something I'll always be grateful to my dad for. I devoured Jupiter's Travels. It was the perfect elixir for a restless teenager curious about the world but still trying to figure out his place in it. My young mind learned from those meticulously crafted pages that the world isn't a place to be feared but embraced, that travel is about the people you interact with more so than the landscapes you pass through, and that travelling by motorcycle is quite frankly the coolest thing anyone can do. Those lessons have stayed with me to this very day.

"What year did you read it, when would that have been?", Ted asks when I tell him about my introduction to Jupiter's Travels.

"I was 14, so that would have been around 1993 or 1994", I replied.

"It's interesting that it was 15 years after it was published that you got it", Ted says. "What's extraordinary about it (Jupiter's Travels), is how long it has survived and how well it is still doing. I think it's mainly because it had the same effect on so many people as it had on you."

I strongly suspect Ted Simon, who's now in his late eighties, is too much of a gentleman to brag about his achievements, so I shall do it for him. Forty years after Jupiter's Travels was first published, it has been read by millions. It remains one of the most important and influential books ever written about motorcycle travel, inspiring generations to go forth and explore. Perhaps most famously Ewan McGregor, of Long Way Round fame, cited Jupiter's Travels as his inspiration to travel on two wheels. In short, Ted is a hero to many of us adventure bikers, as well as plenty of people who choose to explore the world.

With this in mind, I was painfully aware that Ted must have discussed a journey made four decades earlier more than enough for two lifetimes. I asked him if he minded covering old ground again.

"No, that's alright. I can't begrudge the time. You know, the book has been important to me too. Obviously, it's been not only a great source of income, but it has kind of validated my life in a way almost nothing else has."

With Ted's blessing, I asked him to cast his mind back to 1973 to explain why he decided to embark on a motorcycle journey during a period when this form of travel wasn't at all fashionable.

"The interesting thing to me is how completely different everything that had happened to me in life up until then was from the journey. I mean, there was nothing in my life that would have predicted that I would have anything to do with motorcycles, or that I would want to ride one around the world. It came almost out of nowhere."

In fact, Ted had been a successful Fleet Street journalist on newspapers including the Daily Sketch, the Daily Mirror, and the Daily Express. He was sacked three times by the Express, with Ted explaining that, in the cutthroat newspaper business, "you weren't anyone until you got the sack". Having fallen out of love with journalism,

Ted moved to France and began restoring a ruined 13th century gatehouse in the South of France while writing freelance celebrity stories for newspapers when actors filmed on the continent. However, it was while watching television on a visit to England that the idea of travelling around the world first came to him.

"I watched a programme about poverty. This was the beginning of 1973. The West was just getting out of the war, out of scarcity, the Sixties had come and gone. People were beginning to worry about the state of the world and they were actually looking out beyond their own little bubble. There was a programme about poverty, a sort of Attenborough type of programme.

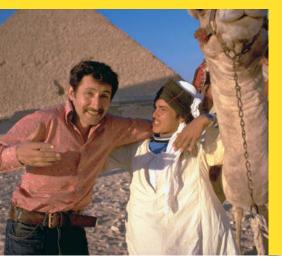
"There was an island somewhere in the South Seas where people were supposed to be terribly poor but the pictures showed the most beautiful beaches, with tropical trees and fruit and stuff like that. There were a lot of men on the beach and they were absolutely beautifully brown, they had glistening brown bodies, and they were dragging huge amounts of fish in from the sea. This kind of contradicted the idea of poverty. If that's poverty, I wouldn't mind some of that. It was such a contradiction and I thought, well this is ridiculous. Despite having done the work that I'd done, I realised I was really very ignorant about the world. Most people were then.

"And then it struck me. I'd been on this planet for 30 years or more and I knew so little about it. That's what founded the germ of the idea in my head about what I was going to do. I was thinking, if I did go around the world, what would be the best way to do it. I went through all the available possibilities I could think of, from donkeys to roller skates, trains and planes and so on. None of them were practical or interesting until I thought about doing it on a motorcycle.

"I thought that would be a very exciting way to do it. It would be bloody dangerous,









I would probably get killed, but it would be worth the effort and it would make a good book. So that's really how it all began. It took six months to get it going."

The fact Ted couldn't ride a motorcycle wasn't an obstacle and, after passing his test, he chose a 500cc Triumph Tiger as the bike that would take him around the world. After initially planning to be away for 18 months, the journey saw him travel 64,000 miles, through 45 countries, over four years.

"I didn't have any problem thinking that I could ride a motorcycle because millions of people, including presumably millions of idiots, were doing it, so I didn't see why I should have trouble. But, of course, I had no idea what it would be like to ride a bike in bad conditions. And, I had absolutely no idea what those bad conditions would be except that I knew there would be desert somewhere. I had no idea how to do that and I never had time to find out before I started. It would have been useful to have someone to tell me how to ride across sand, but I never had time to learn, or mud, or any of those things."

However, when Ted rolled into Egypt early in his journey, he found more pressing matters than road conditions were of concern.

"There was a war. I was hoping it would be over by the time I got there, but it wasn't and it became more and more of a threat as I approached. It did pose a few problems, mainly because of the Egyptians themselves. The populous was all het up about Israeli and Jewish spies and so on. I got arrested twice when I was in Alexandria because people thought I was a spy, but it was dealt with anyway. I was concerned, especially at the frontier because I had a visa that said you could cannot cross the frontier overland into Egypt. I thought they'd shoot me or something like that. But they were actually very nice, they were lovely."

When I suggest many people would have been tempted to turn back for home after getting arrested twice in a war zone, Ted shrugs off the thought.

"No, it never entered my mind then, and it didn't even enter my mind in Brazil. I mean, being locked up in Brazil, that was the worst thing that happened to me (Ted was detained on suspicion of being a spy during a period of military dictatorship). It was imposed on me from outside. I was afraid they might top me because there was no reason why they wouldn't or shouldn't at that time, but my real fear was that they might send me back to England. That was what I was most afraid of after all that, to be deported to the UK. The whole time, even in the worst circumstances, I knew the journey was the best thing that had ever happened to me, it was a marvellous experience."

"It seems to me I got most comfortable in places that were actually terrible places. I mean, like Chile, where there was Pinochet and all sorts of terrible things were happening to people, but I enjoyed it, partly because I fell in love with a really beautiful woman and secondly because it was all so exciting and I wasn't personally under threat. I was alright. I remember that as being a very good time. And then there was the ranch in California. That was just something out of time altogether. I had four months at that ranch. That really was very special. Not something someone could really hope to do today. Innocent times, sort of, anyway..."

The relationships Ted formed and the time he spent working the land on the ranch in California had a huge impact on his life, so much so he later decided to make the Golden State his home.

"It turned out very well. I was there for 35 years in the end, on this piece of land. I think I lost... I think I sacrificed a fair amount by doing that. The book had become so important in the UK, it was very well known. If I'd lived in the UK then I could probably have used that notoriety, or whatever you want to call it, I could probably have used that to have developed a completely different life to the one that I have actually led. I'm not at all sure it would have been a better one, no idea at all.

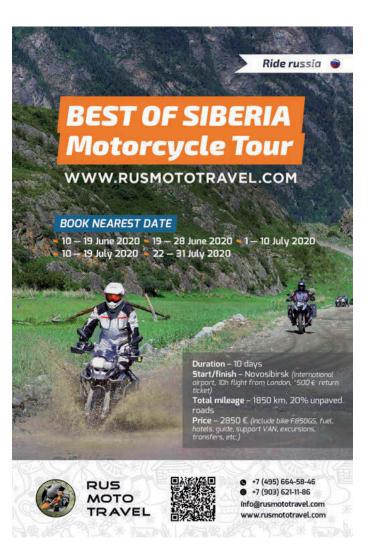


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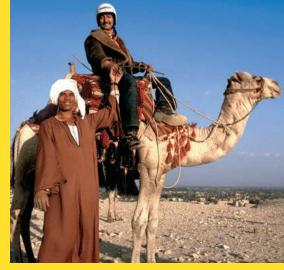
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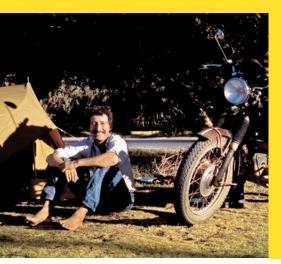














"Going to California, I did it for the wrong reasons. I did it to save a marriage which was impossible to save, but simply through being there it turned me into a sort of agricultural environmentalist really. The organic farming that I did there was an important thing in my life. I'm not at all sorry about having done it (moved to California), but it was very much a turning point."

While those who choose to explore the world by motorcycle spend plenty of time planning adventures, big and small, nothing could prepare Ted for the challenge of returning home.

"The end of a journey like the one I made is a very hard thing to negotiate because, after four years on the road, it is almost impossible to just resume normal service. You can't. Everything becomes very turbulent. I was in real turmoil. And although I'd learned a huge amount about life, and about the world, and about everything, it wasn't much help in solving my own personal problems. So, I made bad decisions and did strange things.

"Fortunately, I had the book to write, so that kind of saved me in a way because I had to focus on the book, so it was a steadying influence, but in every other respect I was quite wild. And then the book suddenly became very successful and that also kind of threw me off a bit. But I don't know that I can say anything very quotable about it."

As an author, Ted Simon is an honest as they get. Jupiter's Travels isn't a tale of macho bravado but is instead an insight into what happens when a man opens himself up to the world - the loneliness, the friendships, the breakdowns, the loves and the losses. Putting your vulnerabilities down on paper for the world to scrutinise isn't an easy task. I ask Ted how he dealt with this challenge during such a tumultuous time in his life.

"It took me a year to write it", he says. "There was no other way to write it except by writing about myself. That was the only way I could think of going because it was really about my experience. Inevitably, it was about the effect those experiences had on me, so that's just how it all came out. And, fortunately, I didn't feel inhibited about doing it, whereas I think, for many people, it would have been very inhibiting. It was the journey itself that helped me to feel free to describe things as they actually happened and not to conceal stuff. I think that's part of what made the book so successful and it's certainly what crossed all kinds of lines. Women liked it as much, if not more, than men. They liked the idea of somebody not trying to be a hero or doing macho stuff. Someone who was willing to admit failings and fears and so it was not difficult at all to do that.

"It was just hard work to write it well. I find writing really quite hard work and I pay a lot of attention to detail. The construction of the sentences and the paragraphs and the general form of the book, that's what's hard to do. But getting the truth on paper is a technical problem not a moral one. I found it not at all hard to write about how I felt at different times. The nice things I did, the shameful things I did, the surprising things I did. That was easy for me to write about."

The title of Jupiter's Travels has its origins in an encounter Ted had at an Indian wedding with a man said to be a clairvoyant and a seer who could read a man's soul and destiny. This man took Ted's hand and told the traveller he had a determined soul and mind, before telling him "You are Jupiter". Somewhat ironically for someone who doesn't believe in the afterlife, Jupiter is often referred to in Hindu mythology as the guide or teacher of the Gods.

"I don't believe in God", Ted says. "So, the book is really my afterlife. That's where I'll go when I die."

I'll certainly pass Jupiter's Travels on to my children just as my dad did to me so that, in my family, and in plenty of others I'm sure, Jupiter and the story of his travels will continue to live on, teach and guide future generations for many years to come. ABR



No two ways about it. If I didn't have my Halvarssons on, I'd be freezing my butt off

You may think that your British winters are cold but, here in the northern regions of Sweden, it gets proper cold, as we believe your young people say. Twenty below is not uncommon. Thirty degrees below zero is not unheard of.

Okay, so we don't tend to ride our bikes in these conditions but we do, of course, make clothing for the snowmobile market and so, as a company, we are perhaps more aware than most of the problems that arise when you get too cold.

There's no feeling that is worse. And there's

nothing that's more dangerous either. Here at Halvarssons, we're all about keeping riders feeling comfortable on the bike. If you're shivering with cold, and if you've lost all feeling in your fingers, you won't be concentrating on the road. You become a liability; not just to other road users, but almost certainly to yourself too.

It's why we use only the best quality, proprietary insulating materials like Outlast, Thinsulate and Innoborne. And it's why we produce no less than four different types of base layer, as well as

a number of mid-layer fleeces and softshells.

If you ride throughout the year, then we'd probably recommend our drop-liner Wien suit. There's a move towards laminated outfits these days but, if warmth is your priority, then the layers of air in a drop-liner outfit will insulate you better.

Wear the Wien over merino wool base layers and, say, our soft-shell mid layer, and you're going to stay as warm as a bug in a rug as you say in your country. We really love your sense of humour.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

BRACKETING

SIMON THOMAS EXPLAINS HOW USING THE BRACKETING BUTTON ON YOUR CAMERA CAN HELP YOU NAIL STUNNING SHOTS OF YOUR MOTORCYCLE ADVENTURES.

Most cameras today have more buttons than you know what to do with, and while a few of us explore them and the features they activate, there are a few buttons that most consider as unfathomable and therefore untouchable. For one reason or another, the AEB (Auto Exposure Bracketing) bracket button is one of them. This is strange as almost every digital camera on the planet offers bracketing. By the end of this article, you will wonder what the mystery was all about and why you weren't using this feature all along.

RACKET, BRACKET, WHAT?

So, what is bracketing? Well, in simple terms, bracketing is a feature that allows your camera to take the same photo more than once using different settings, which produce differing exposures and results.

"Why do you want that?" I hear you ask. Well, say you're photographing a mountain landscape, like the main image in this article. The rider, Lisa, and the foreground needed one setting to be properly exposed, while the mountains needed another, and the absurdly bright sky and clouds another setting altogether.

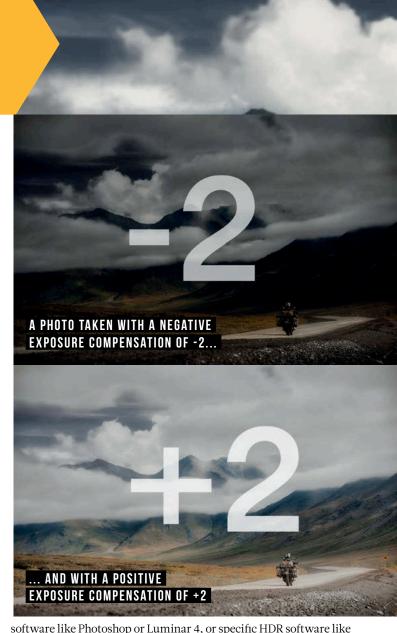
With Lisa quickly accelerating away from me, I only had a few seconds to work out the precise settings I needed, and I knew that the chances of me getting them all right first time were slim to none. But I figured I could get somewhere close. With AEB turned on, I now had three chances of getting the image perfectly exposed. Most cameras allow you to choose how many bracketed shots to take (just google search 'AEB' and your camera model).

I usually set my camera to shoot three images but you can go as high as nine. In the Auto Exposure Bracket settings, you can also select the amount of exposure difference (f-stops) you want between each of the images. The increments you can select, irrespective of camera model, are traditionally talked about in terms of 1/3 of a stop.

OK, hang-on, what the hell is a stop? Right, camera talk aside, try this. When someone talks about making the shot 'one full stop darker', it's the equivalent of taking the shot with a pair of sunglasses over the lens. Two stops would be your camera wearing two pairs of sunglasses. Three stops, well you get the idea. Conversely, increasing stops is just photo talk for increasing the image's brightness by the equivalent amount.

TOP TIP: I set my AEB settings to allow my camera to shoot three images with two stops difference. All this means is that my camera will shoot the image with the exposure settings I use, plus one shot that is two stops brighter and another shot which is two stops darker. One of these is going work.

So, you have now got three shots, but what do you do with them? You might just find that one them is spot on, even if it wasn't the image with your original settings. Thank you AEB and Adventure Bike Rider for this article. Alternatively, you could use photo editing



Skylum's Aurora HDR 2019 to tweak it to perfection.

Now, go forth and bracket. Have fun and remember, make sure you share your results with us at Facebook.com/2ridetheworld. ABR



WHO'S WRITING?

Simon and Lisa Thomas have ridden their way into a life that most of us can only imagine. This year is their 16th year on the road and in that time the duo has amassed more than 500,000 miles on their ride through 80 countries and six continents. Along the way, they've traversed 36 deserts, survived a broken neck in the Amazon Jungle, cheated death and become professional photographers, writers and public speakers. www.2ridetheworld.com.



Location: Haul Road, riding north to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, USA. Copyright © Simon & Lisa Thomas – www.2ridetheworld.com

HERE'S THE INFO FOR THE **IMAGE:**

CAMERA BODY: Nikon D3

LENS: Nikkor 70-200mm f/2.8G ED

VR II

FOCAL LENGTH: 105 mm

FOCUS MODE: Auto

APERTURE: f/4

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/1000 seconds

EXPOSURE MODE: Auto

EXPOSURE COMP: -1

METERING: Matrix

ISO SENSITIVITY: ISO 200

WHITE BALANCE: Shade

SPEED LIGHT/FLASH: Did not fire

PICTURE PROFILE: Warm

SHARPENING: 0

CONTRAST: 0

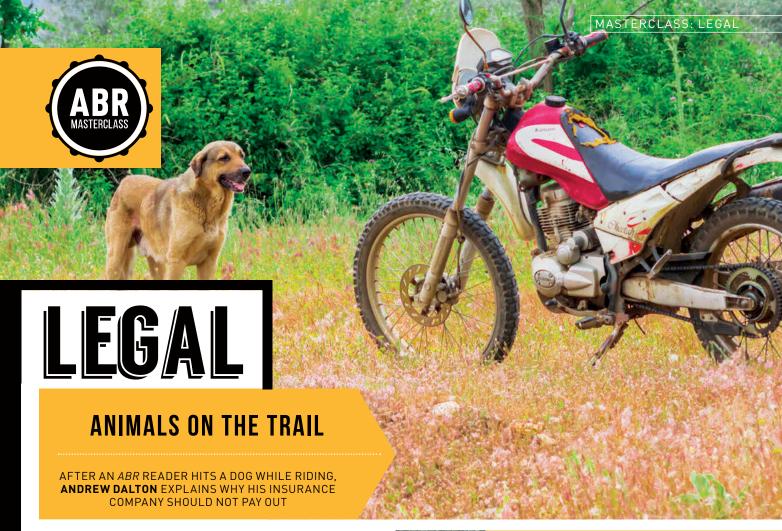
BRIGHTNESS: 0

SATURATION: 0

HUE: 0

PROCESSED WITH: Luminar 4





Q. I was riding my trustee F 650 GS along a single lane, badly broken, single-track C class county road just as dusk was falling, when a border collie ran out of a farmyard straight into my path. I hit the dog, but I stayed on. My battered bike was no more battered, but the dog was in a terrible state. A woman ran out after the dog and she got quite hysterical. An older man then came out and looked at the dog who was clearly in distress and badly injured. The man went back into the farmhouse, got his shotgun, and shot the dog. The older guy clearly knew what he was doing and just wanted to put this poor creature out of its obvious misery.

I called the police and they turned up, made some sympathetic noises to everyone and then got back into their car. Despite the drama, everyone was quite calm. Even the young woman seemed to calm herself. I thought no more of it until about six weeks after the collision, I got a letter from a local solicitor telling me that the dog was a 'highly trained and valuable working dog' and demanding a couple of thousand pounds for the purchase of a new dog and its training. Do I have to pay this? Or does my insurance cover it? And if it does, will I lose my no claims bonus?

A. In answer to your three questions, you do not have to pay this. Whilst your insurance would cover it, in order for this dog owner to bring a claim, she has to prove negligence on your part and there is none. What you need to watch out for is your insurers paying off the dog owner with a few hundred pounds, and then stuffing your no claims bonus, then reaping in thousands of pounds, over the course of the next few years of increased premium.

Firstly, it is an offence to 'cause or permit' a dog to be on a designated road without the dog being on a lead. Secondly, as the dog was unlawfully running loose and uncontrolled, negligence will be presumed against the owner. If the owner can show a credible story as to how the dog got onto the road without negligence, there might be a defence to a claim that you might bring, but it does not give her a claim against you. As you were



WHO'S WRITING?

Andrew Dalton is an ex-despatch rider turned solicitor and barrister with over 25 years experience in the field of motorcycle law. He is a regular motorcyclist running a KTM 1290 Super Adventure, a Husqvarna 701, and a Husqvarna 350, and is an experienced European and UK rider with well-recognised expertise in both British and European motorcycle law.

uninjured, and your bike was not damaged, you have no claim as you have no loss.

The letter from the solicitors is about as weird as your day. I have read the letter. No actual negligence has been alleged against you. Send the letter to your insurers and make it crystal clear that your insurers are to make no offers to the careless dog owner. You need to watch out that they do not pay out on this claim on 'a commercial basis' and then spank you for the next five years as a result of your 'fault' claim.

Your insurers have something of a track record for paying out small and speculative claims. My strong suspicion is this is so they can shake you down for increased premiums for the next five years. Pay out £500 in a 'commercial settlement' and next year's premium goes up £1,000, the year after £800, and so on. Commercial? Yup. For them. Very expensive for you. You do the maths.

You need to be super alert to this. Be difficult and demanding, and if push really comes to shove and you think they may pay out, tell them you do not want them to meet any claim and you will 'indemnify' yourself and let the dog owner take you to small claims court. I suspect the solicitor who wrote you the very odd letter has not been to court in living memory. I am not sure he would actually know how to sue you. It is a try on, but one where you can be shafted by your own insurers.



TECHNIQUES

STAYING ALERT WHILE RIDING

EVEN A MOMENTARY LOSS OF CONCENTRATION CAN HAVE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES WHILE RIDING A MOTORCYCLE. **MISTI HURST** EXPLAINS HOW TO COMBAT FATIGUE AND STAY ALERT IN THE SADDLE.

Despite what a lot of people think, riding a motorcycle is a strenuous physical activity. Even if you aren't riding hard and you are just heading out for an afternoon cruise, your body and mind are continuously hard at work.

The physical effort of sitting on your bike, using your legs to grip the tank, relying on your core to hold you up, and your arms to steer, combined with the mental effort of staying alert, looking ahead, and making split second decisions, can easily wear you out.

Add wind, rain, heat, and long hours of riding to the mix and you're putting your body through some pretty stressful circumstances without necessarily realising it. This can cause you to tire quickly and lose concentration, and we all know how important it is to remain sharp and vigilant while riding.

So, here are some tips and strategies we can all use to stay alert and focused while riding.

KEEP HYDRATED

Dehydration can slow your thinking, decrease concentration, increase fatigue and impair the brain's functionality. Therefore, it is imperative that you start out well hydrated and stay that way throughout the remainder of your ride. Hydration begins before you even hop on your bike. Ideally you should drink at least a glass or two of water before you leave the house and plenty more along the way.

Men and women in general should drink between two to three litres of water per day and that amount goes up when exercising, especially in a warm climate. So, either wear a hydration pack so you can sip while you ride, or stop regularly to rehydrate. Plain water is usually the best option, but sports drinks containing electrolytes (such a sodium and potassium), coconut water or even chocolate milk are great options as well.

Dehydration doesn't always happen when it is hot out either. Even in cooler temperatures, it's easy to fall behind in water consumption and to experience the damaging effects. Instead of a cold glass of water on a cold day, try herbal tea, hot apple cider, or water at room temperature.

Symptoms of dehydration can include a dry mouth, headache, confusion, tiredness, cramps, loss of focus, dizziness and, in more severe cases, low blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, rapid



breathing, fever and occasionally delirium or unconsciousness. At the first sign of any of these symptoms, you should take a break from riding, rehydrate and rest until you feel better.

KEEP HUNGER AT BAY

While you're refuelling your body with water, you should also fill up with some healthy snacks. It's easy to forget to eat frequently when you're out for long rides, but when your blood sugar level drops, so does your brain power. Eating every three hours or so to keep your body fuelled will also sharpen the mind, but you must also make good, healthy choices. Stopping for a chocolate bar or doughnut and coffee isn't going to provide you with the right kind of nutrients your body needs. Fruit, veggies, whole grains and protein are much better options.

Before you leave on your ride, pack a few travel-friendly snacks in your tank bag or pockets. Some of the best options include beef jerky, almonds, trail mix, granola, energy bars, dried fruit, dry-roasted edamame, peanut or nut butter on crackers or rice cakes, homemade muffins, or fruit bars.

TAILOR YOUR GEAR TO THE CONDITIONS

Wearing the right gear can also help keep you alert and focused. Being too hot or cold on a motorcycle will affect your concentration levels, as well as your enjoyment in the saddle. If you are riding in warm weather, outfit yourself in lightweight protective gear with vents for breathability and tailor your layers for the heat.



In colder weather, layering fitted, wool clothing under insulated, jackets and pants, will help you stay warm and cosy. Layers are great because, if you get too hot or cold, you can simply remove or add a layer to suit your required comfort level. Make sure you buy good quality, technical clothing that is both waterproof and breathable, and has options like zippered vents so you can adjust on the go for changing temperatures.

A balaclava over your face works well in cold temperatures, and always have something available to cover your neck. There are also plenty of heated gear options available these days as well. You can't possibly control a motorcycle well if you are fighting with the elements and feeling too hot or too cold.

STAY DRY

Good waterproof and insulated jackets, trousers, gloves and boots are a must to ensure you stay dry in the saddle. If you get wet, chances are you will get very cold which will reduce your alertness on your bike.

However, when buying new gear, make sure you test out how it feels on your own bike and how it affects your ability to feel the controls. Boots that are too chunky can make it hard to shift and brake, and likewise gloves that are too thick can interfere with throttle application. If you need to think hard about working your bike's controls because of uncomfortable gear, you won't be as alert to dangers on the road as you would otherwise be.

REDUCE WIND FATIGUE

Wind noise can also cause fatigue when riding and take your focus off the road. If you're getting blasted by the wind, investing in a larger aftermarket screen will help direct it around you, reducing fatigue. Wearing a good pair of earplugs will also keep noise to a minimum and your concentration levels up.

LOOK AFTER YOUR EYES

Staring into bright sunlight for too long can result in a throbbing headache which will take your focus away from the road. Protect your eyes from the sun with a pair of sunglasses or a tinted visor. Also, make sure you keep your visor clean, and wear your glasses if you need them, to reduce the strain on your eyes.

TAKE A BREAK

Even if you follow all the tips listed above, you might still experience moments of fatigue and inattention. If this happens, your best bet is to pull over as soon as possible for a short break. It's far too dangerous to try to push through if you are tired, as even momentary losses of concentration can have disastrous consequences. Hop off your bike, stretch your legs, enjoy the scenery, take a little rest and clear your head. As the quote goes, 'life is a journey, not a destination'.



MEDICAL

HOW TO DEAL WITH BACK PAIN

SUFFERING FROM BACK PAIN WHILE RIDING CAN BE A DEMORALISING EXPERIENCE. **SUZIE BOSTOCK** EXPLAINS HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE TO HELP REDUCE THE CHANCE OF BACK PAIN.

Back pain can turn a pleasurable ride into miles of misery for bikers, especially on long-distance journeys or while riding off road. It's something plenty of riders suffer from and, while it may be tempting to simply grin and bear it with the aid of painkillers, there are measures you can take to reduce your chance of suffering with pain.

Core strengthening exercises in particular can help prevent back pain. I have included a few core-based exercises to help get you started. If you are having an acute episode of back pain or have a long-term back problem, always get advice from a qualified physiotherapist or your GP before undertaking any new exercises.

Exercises should not hurt so stop if you experience any pain. Also remember, before any exercise make sure you do a good warm-up and start new exercises slowly and at the easiest/beginner level.

PLANK

Beginner version: Lie down on the floor with your elbows bent, forearms on the floor, palms down, eyes looking towards the floor. Brace your shoulders and abdominals, lifting your hips off the floor so that all your bodyweight is supported by your shoulders, forearms and knees.

Keep your spine in line, do not twist, do not look up and do not dome or arch your back. Maintain the tension in your abdominals. Hold for 15–30 seconds if able (maintaining good spinal alignment) and repeat 5–10 times with 30 seconds rest between each plank. You can build up the holding time slowly as you improve.

Standard version: As above, however, straighten your legs once in the plank position so that you take your weight through your toes, not your knees. This is much harder! Repeat as above, but, if it's too difficult, hold it for less time or revert to the beginner version.

SIDE PLANK

Beginner version: Lie on your side resting on your elbow and forearm and knees bent. You can rest your other arm by your side. Your elbow should be directly underneath your shoulder. Brace your abdominals and lift your hips off the floor keeping your knees, hips and torso in line. Maintain the tension in



your abdominals and hold the position for 10–20 seconds if able with good alignment. Repeat 5–10 times with a 30 second rest in between each side plank. You can build up the holding time slowly as you improve.

Standard version: As the beginner version, however with legs straight. Again, this is much harder so be careful. Your weight will be supported through your forearm, elbow and side of your lower-most foot. Do not allow sagging of your lower back. If you can't maintain the right position decrease the hold time or revert back to the beginner version.

BRIDGE

Lie on your back, knees bent up, feet flat on the floor with your arms by your side. Brace your abdominal muscles and slowly lift your hips up towards the ceiling, lifting your bottom and mid to lower back off the floor. Aim to get your hips in line with your thighs and torso, maintaining abdominal tension. Hold for 10–20 seconds and then lower. Repeat 8–12 times as able with good form.

HORIZONTAL BALANCE

Stand upright with your hips and spine in neutral. Trans-



WHO'S WRITING?



Suzie loves being on her Suzuki DR650 and has ridden over 30,000 miles in South America. Her dream is to explore every continent by motorcycle in her lifetime. Suzie is a HCPC and CSP registered physiotherapist with over nine years' experience and is also training to become a health coach and nutritional therapist. She has a BSc in Sport science and management, a MSc in Physiotherapy and is passionate

about health promotion and injury prevention. You can find out more about her travels on www.avvida.co.uk or visit www.overlanderhealth.com for more health related info.

fer your weight onto one leg and lean forwards, keeping your spine in neutral and taking the other leg out straight behind you, and arms out in front of you. Try to keep good alignment between the straightened leg and upper body whilst keeping the supporting leg slightly bent. Brace your abdominals to maintain the alignment. Do not twist the pelvis or spine. Sometimes it helps to get someone to watch you. Hold for a few seconds and then return to the start position. Repeat on the other leg. As this requires good balance, make sure you have something sturdy to hold onto if required or have someone else to help.

If you're really keen you can take up a Pilates class, which includes a good deal of core strengthening, from lumbar stabilisation exercises through to more dynamic, functional exercises. Often classes are included in gym memberships, so if you go to a gym ask them. There are also many private classes, many run by physiotherapists. If you have problems with your back it's often useful to consult a physiotherapist.

The NHS have some useful resources to calculate BMI at www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator/

For any questions or a reference list, please email Suzie at motivatedhealthcoach@gmail.com















EUROPE & ASIA - NORTH ROUTE



MUNICH - M()SC()W - BANGK()K

- TOUR DATES 12.08. - 24.10.2020
- START/FINISH Munich / Bangkok
- **DURANCE** 77 days
- **DISTANCE** Length: ca. 19.600 km

HIGHLIGHTS

The old town of Cracow
Moscow incl. Kremlin
Gorky Park et al.
The Tartar capital, Kazan
Kalashnikov-Museum
Ride the Silk Road through
North China, Great Wall of China,
Xi'an, the old imperial city,
Terracotta Army, and many more

66

A rarely travelled region with lots of hidden treasures.

99



Q. It's my intention to use my Triumph Tiger through the winter. My question is, what tyre do I use? On my car, I have a set of all-season tyres that are suitable for year-round use. I've also previously used full winter tyres on a car. Are there suitable bike tyres for winter use?

Colin

A. Hi Colin,

It's a good question. I've searched around and there aren't many. There may be more available in countries where winter weather is treated more seriously than here in the UK.

The problem with UK availability is importers are less keen to fill a warehouse with unsold tyres that will be difficult to shift as they age. The only make that I've used is the Heidenau K60. This is available as a winter-spec tyre and it's very good. A name I've also found is Anlas, which does full winter-spec tyres, but the range is a bit limited.

So, what is the difference between a winter and summer type of tyre?

Summer tyres have to operate and supply grip in quite a range of temperatures, with tread to shift water when the inevitable rain starts. Winter tyres are more designed to operate at low temperatures, usually below 7C. The compound of a winter tyre has a high silica content which lets it work in the cold.

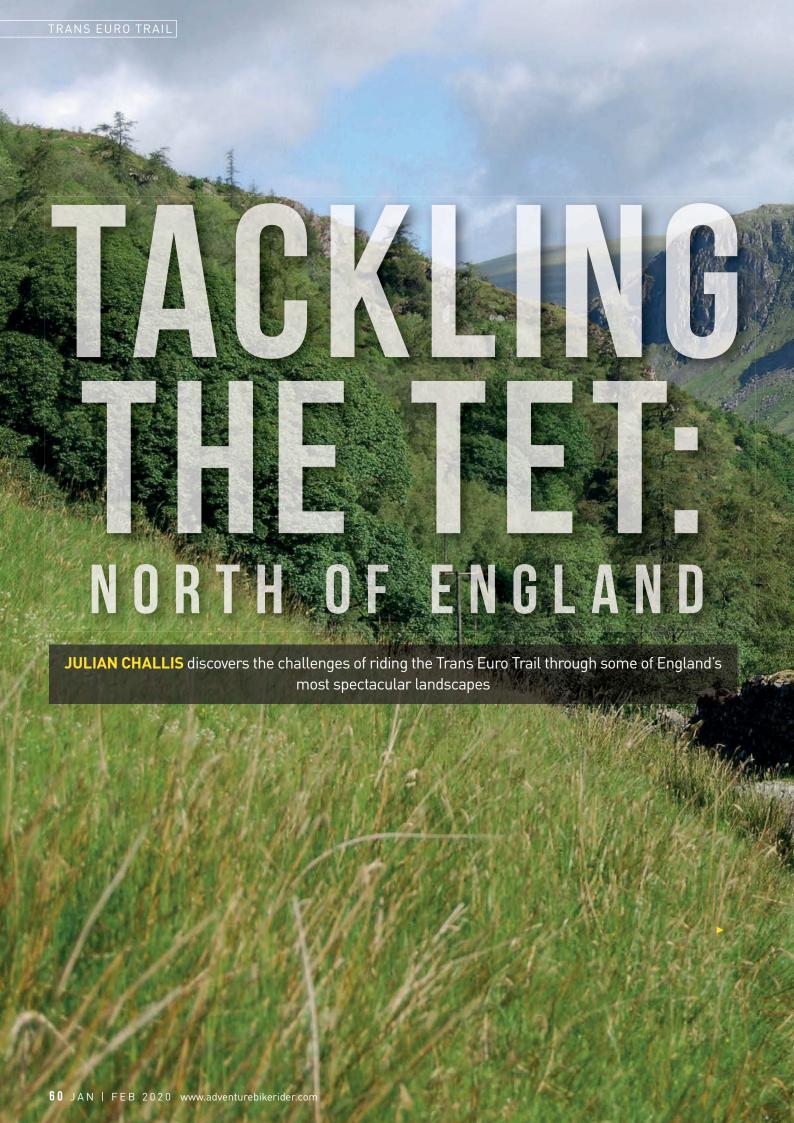
Metzeler Tourance Next tyres have a higher silica content than some others. I'm sure most tyres produced for adventure bikes would be similar. I think that to go with a good adventure spec tyre from a top manufacturer would be the best option. If it's icy, nothing will grip unless your tyre is studded, but that's not legal in the UK. A good aggressive treaded adventure tyre should be able to cope with deepish snow, but maybe the best option would be leave it in the shed on those days, though where's the fun in that?

So, where are we with this? Fit a good pair of tyres just before the bad weather hits to give the maximum grip in the conditions. Maybe lower the pressures about 20%. This helps the tyre warm up a little quicker and spreads the load over a wider footprint.

The other consideration in winter riding is punctures. When the roads are wet, a nail or screw is lubricated by the water, this makes penetration easier. It's best to carry a puncture repair kit or an aerosol of puncture fluid. Or, even install something like Slime tyre sealant when fitting new tyres. Make sure you only use the manufacturer's recommended amount though or it can affect wheel balance. My winter riding tip is a vacuum flask of Bovril... It's the best internal heating for me.

GOT SOMETHING TO ASK DAVE?

Send in your bike related questions to dave@adventurebikerider.com and if we publish yours you'll get a free subscription to ABR!





S

ince the Trans European Trail was created a few years ago, legions of riders from across Europe have enjoyed the unique delights of adventure travel without having to go through the faff of planning a route and everything that entails. Thanks to a dedicated band of motorcycling enthusiasts and

the work of the army of 'linesmen' in each area who have actually come up with the routes, exploring in many countries throughout Europe has become both easy and accessible for everyone with a computer and perhaps more importantly, a motorcycle.

In the UK, the TET stretches for more than 1,816 miles. Starting at Dover in the far south east, it follows a meandering route across England, then heads into Wales and up to the Lake District, before cutting across to its finishing point in the UK at Newcastle. Along the way it takes in stunning scenery and plenty of national parks. And if you want to explore down to the tip of the South West, the recently added Great Western Trail goes all the way down to Land's End and back.

My plan was to pick up the trail in Kendall, on the edge of Cumbria's Lake District National Park, and ride the most northerly section of the TET in the UK, 450-miles to Newcastle. My riding buddies were Matt, trip organiser and head honcho of Bristol Adventure and Trail Bike Club on his SWM R300, and Chris who is the Trail Riders Fellowship rights of way expert and serial trail rider, mounted on his beloved Honda CRF250X.

I was going to be riding a 2019 690 Enduro R. I was hopeful that the bike would be the perfect tool for the job, combining the range of the my Ténéré 660 with the agility of my much travelled KTM EXC 250. OK, so luggage options were a tad limited but you can't have everything. 'Pack light and pack right' was the mantra I'd aimed for and, as a man who always overpacks, one I managed to stick to surprisingly well.

So, at 7 am and under leaden skies, we set off from Bristol for the north, buoyed up with excitement and an oversized bag of jelly beans, the snack of heroes. Five hours and three coffees later, we reach Kendal on the east of the Lake District where we unloaded the bikes in unexpectedly bright sunshine. Matt's plan involves him dropping us off and then taking the bike trailer on to the other side of the country before returning by train some six hours later. It's a fine plan for Chris and me as all we have to do is while away the afternoon in a lovely little town that boasts a historic castle, a pleasing selection of antique shops and, perhaps more importantly, over a dozen pubs offering a wide selection of local ales. If heaven exists, I suspect it looks very much like this.

Matt eventually rejoined the party at around 8pm, by which time Chris and I could barely focus, but we heroically join him for more beers and the most excellent Thai banquet at Bangkok 7. From what I can recall, I'd thoroughly recommend the Pepper Squid and the Chicken Pad Thai. We stagger back to the hostel and I'm thankful I'm not on the top bunk.

After a hearty full-English breakfast, it's time to load up and, with sun already wearing a hat, the prospects for a great day of riding are good. Matt fires up the Garmin and we're off out of Kendal in the morning commuter traffic, the pleasure of being out riding bikes when others are off to work is evident on all our faces. We have to backtrack a little towards Windermere to pick up our planned start point but soon we're on lovely little twisty country roads that take us towards the epic hills and mountains that this area is famous for. The route takes us up a long and beautiful valley between dry stone walls for three miles or so before we head to our first lane, a gnarly and technical challenge straight from the off. If you've any intentions of trying to tackle the TET on a big adventure

bike, then it's lanes like this that make it clear you may have made a mistake. The 690 makes short shrift of the climb, the MOTOZ rally tyres and the KTM traction control system working perfectly to propel me to the first of many gates on our three-day journey. Matt's bike isn't hooking up quite as well and he's spinning out a bit on the rock steps in the next section, but when we reach the top of the climb, the epic view is well worth the effort.

We gradually drop back down the hill to pick up a great selection of farmland trails and wooded tracks that take us on a meandering route back into Kendal. There's a bit of roadwork to take us out the other side before diving into tiny and overgrown ancient lanes that wind through the landscape like green veins. The final lane pops us out onto the road that leads down to the Mallard chain ferry across Lake Windermere. As the ferry chugs across the iconic waterway, I take in the incredible views across the lake. We ride off the ferry and follow another stunning section of lanes and roads leads up towards Ambleside. The route passes by Hilltop, Beatrix Potter's former house where coachloads of tourists are snapping away at everything in sight and bulk buying Peter Rabbit merchandise. The place brings back fond memories as we brought our daughter here some 29 years ago and probably took the same photos.

We find a quiet pub for a lunch stop and are treated to a wonderful fish finger sandwich on crusty, white bread and a medicinal shandy, the perfect trail meal. Sadly, all of it nearly makes a return appearance once we set out again, as the first post-prandial lane is a really tough climb up a sunken valley with football sized rocks covering the whole route. We all make the top in good order, if a tad rosier than we started, and we go on to cover a series of loops through beautiful woodland and along paths that are so good it's hard to believe we're allowed to be on them - a view that is evident on some of the ramblers faces too. The great thing about the TET is that it's all legal, so we slow down obligingly and wave cheerily at the occasional grumpy face.

After our second fuel stop of the day, thanks to Matt's pea-sized tank and 2-minute reserve capacity, the late afternoon route sees us travelling high over moorland littered with great trails and more gates than we'd really prefer, but the trade off with the scenery is suitable recompense. The recent rain has left lots of puddles to avoid or wheelie through, or in Chris' case - accelerate through and totally soak me.

As we've come all the way over to the west coast, the clear sky allows us to see across the Irish Sea to the Isle of Man, an area with just as many cracking lanes and trails. With the sun slipping down over Ramsey, we head for our elected overnight stop at Seascale. It's a bleak and unlovable town overshadowed by the massive Sellafield Nuclear power station, but the hotel is warm and friendly and serves some of the best burgers we've ever had, washed down with a few hipster IPAs for good measure. What a fantastic day.

The following morning we're up bright eyed and bushy tailed for a truly enormous breakfast, one so large that the two Japanese businessmen alongside us are photographing the feast before tackling the mound of food. With the bikes extracted from the function suite where they had kindly let us store them overnight, it's straight out onto the road for 20 or so more miles of roads interspersed with a series of surprisingly challenging grass covered lanes that hide all manner of ruts, holes and rocks. After crossing a long moorland section, we're soon at Keswick for a morning coffee at The Filling Station, a regular biker stop.

Suitably caffeinated, and with the weather moving up a gear from great to glorious, we head out of the town and follow a long climb that picks up the Old Coach Road, a great route with fantastic views all around and long sections of fast and wonderfully enjoyable trails. We drop down from the moor heading east now









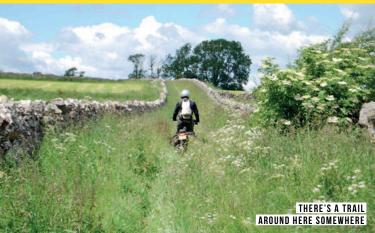
WHAT BIKE IS BEST FOR THE TET?

OK, so if you wanted to open a can of worms, this is possibly one of the biggest you could pick. Dare to go online and suggest that one bike is more or less suitable for the task will have a torrent of abuse and derision that is hard to believe. So, for the removal of doubt, let's just quote the TET website on the matter:

'The Trans Euro Trail is aimed at small and medium capacity trail bikes - bikes such as Yamaha's WR250R and XT600 and XT660Z Ténéré, CCM's GP450, KTM's 690 and Suzuki's DRZ400. Larger bikes can tackle it, but riders need to be more experienced and competent. Soft luggage, travelling light is the ethos – leave those panniers and armchairs at home. This is overlanding in its purest form.'

Clear enough? For our part, we've ridden most of the UK TET on a range of bikes from a Yamaha Ténéré 660, to a KTM 250 EXC and a KTM 690 Enduro R, with other riders on everything from a Honda CRF250X, a KTM 450 EXC and a BMW G 650 GS, to a Honda CB500X. Although the Ténéré and the BMW did the job, they were far harder work in some sections than the lighter bikes, and the CB500X was largely unsuitable for much of the route save the tarmac.







and, as we pass by Ullswater lake, we're sad to be leaving the Lakes behind, or in Matt's case, leaving Chris and I behind as he forgets to stop at a turning and we carry on for some miles before retracing our steps to locate him again. It's more grassy overgrown lanes as we head towards Penrith and the Pennines beyond, but with blue sky in every direction the riding is just joyous.

The joy is a tad short lived as, stopping at the end of a lane, my bike randomly decides the side stand is down and won't click into gear without cutting out. It takes some fettling to eventually sort a fix that involves nothing more complicated than a half millimetre thick washer on switch bracket to make it happy again.

Lunch at the Clickham Inn at Blencow is a welcome stop, and the staff seem pleased to see us despite our dusty and mud splattered clothing. Suitably refreshed it's on to more grassy lanes, but now they are interspersed with tricky and rocky climbs as we head across the rolling landscape of the Pennines. Turning into another overgrown lane, we meet two more trail riders, who stop for a chat. Mounted on an older 690 Enduro and a XR250, the two lads are actually following the TET, having come down from Scotland to fit in a two-day stint on the trail. Considering there is much internet wailing about the TET becoming overcrowded, these two guys are the sole riders actually following the route that we have come across.

As we are riding on the Summer Solstice, it's particularly apt that the TET passes through the stone circle at Little Salkeld. Long Meg and her Daughters, as the circle is known, looks particularly beautiful in the pale afternoon light and there are a few druid and goth types wandering around finding themselves and feeling mystical.

The next hour or so brings a mix of challenges, notably a deep-water crossing that I feel best advised to walk the bike through rather than risk a downing. The annoying thing with waterproof boots is that once the water has gone over the top, the waterproofing only serves to keep the water inside. With a good half pint now swishing back and forth in my boots we press on up through a series of farm fields, narrowly avoiding being chased by a particularly pissed off and enormous bull.

Having booked a room in a pub for the night in Alston, which lays claim to being England's highest market town according to Matt, the final section of trail is a long sandy track with beautifully formed natural whoops that beg to be jumped. All is going well as the three of us leap along the track with glee until my tank bag slips forward on a landing, and inconveniently knocks against the ignition key and turns off the motor. The resultant immediate deceleration almost pitches me over the bars, and its more luck than judgement that I manage to keep things upright.

Our chosen accommodation in Alston is particularly random. The Victoria Inn is an old-school pub that doubles up as a curry house run by a slightly shouty landlady. Turning down the delicacies that pervade through the whole of the building and even up to the bedrooms, we opt for a gentle wander through the town with added beer stops. We finish the evening in a pub down by the river to the sound of young people laughing inside and two older locals fighting outside – Britain at its finest.

Our final day welcomes us with bright sunshine streaming through the thin curtains and the aroma of sweaty, wet kit in a confined space. Our host provides another large and thankfully curry-free breakfast and we're out on the road again at 8.30am sharp. The first lane comes just minutes after we've left Alston with a long and stony climb that gets the blood pumping at full speed. When we rejoin the road, it's a lovely sweeping ribbon of tarmac that lays across the top of the hills like a strip of silk, it's beauty marred only by the legions of baby rabbits that want to play on the carriageway, and sadly, the crows feasting on those with slower reactions.







We turn left off the road through a gateway and pick up a trail that is signposted to Tyne Head. As our final destination will be alongside the banks of the mighty waterway in Newcastle, it's apt that we should pass by the source of the river on our last day on the trails. The track is actually the toughest we've ridden in the course of the three days, with rock steps, boulder strewn climbs, and polished slabs to contend with. The 690 smashes through the lot with Terminator style efficiency.

A long loop over the moors brings us back to Alston to refuel and then up again as the track takes us into County Durham. We grab a late morning coffee in a great little country pub, the day then settling into a gentle rhythm of gates, grassy lanes and sweeping trails across the warm green landscape. A few hours later we reach the trails in the Slake forest, where long, sandy tracks slice back and forth among the trees. It's some of the most enjoyable trails we've ridden, and the fast and sinuous dirt tracks interspersed with water splashes and jumps have us whooping and laughing like kids for mile after mile. Man, trail riding is good!

Come mid-afternoon and the trails are becoming less challenging and more grassy and overgrown as we drop down from the moors. We opt for a meal deal lunch at a petrol station in Stocksfield and Chris does a passable impression of an old giffer by producing a bag of battered Lidl chocolate bars from his rucksack. The road signs are now showing Newcastle as little more than 20 miles away, and although it's where we've been heading for the whole journey, you can see that none of us wants the trails to end.

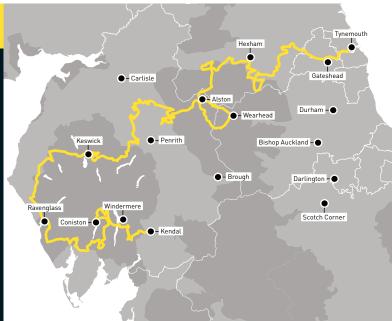
The final section of the journey takes us through the outer suburbs of Newcastle and then follows the Tyne all the way into the centre of the city. The TET linesman has wound the route around the city streets and it's hard not to feel like conquering Dakar heroes as we cut through the traffic on our muddy dirt bikes. Although not on the official route, we head for the waterfront between the two landmark bridges across the Tyne. The end of the trail in the UK actually comes a few miles later at the ferry port further down the river, but for us this feels so much better.

The sense of achievement is wonderful. We might have only travelled just over 450 miles in nothing but perfect weather, but if feels like we've just completed an epic journey. We've travelled right the way across the north of England on everything from slippery, overgrown lanes and rock-strewn climbs, to glorious trails over achingly beautiful moorland, and along sweeping fast A roads slicing through incredible scenery. Stood on the banks of the River Tyne between its two iconic bridges, I'm feeling on top of the world. This has been a hell of a trip and I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

SO, WHAT IS THE TET?

The Trans European Trail stretches almost 32,000 miles across most of Europe from the top of Scandinavia, within the Arctic circle, and right down almost to the top of Africa. Put together by a group of motorcyclists with nothing more than a love of riding rather than any commercial motivation, it's a truly outstanding achievement and an incredible gift to bikers across the world.

Simply by going to the website www.transeurotrail.org, you can pick the country you want to ride in and, with the click of a mouse, download a GPX trail of the route. Each country has its own band of linesmen that have drawn together their knowledge and experience to create a route combining both road and off-road sections, linking together with the rest of the TET in other countries. You can do as much or as little as you want, safe in the knowledge that the routes will be legal, enjoyable and thoroughly rewarding. If there are sections that look set to defeat you, simply look at your Sat Nav or phone GPX reader, and find a route to miss them out.





TRAIL BAGS & SADDLEBAGS











YOUR YEAR OF ADVENTURE

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOME ADVENTURE BIKING INSPIRATION FOR 2020 THEN LOOK NO FURTHER. THIS SELECTION OF SOME OF THE BEST TOURS AND EVENTS TAKING PLACE ACROSS THE GLOBE IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO START YOUR YEAR OF ADVENTURE



2020 ADVENTURES

RIDE THE ROOF OF INDIA

What is it?

Fourteen days of riding the Royal Enfield Himalayan or the latest 500cc Bullet Trials Works Replica. You'll ride high up into the Indian Himalayas and take on the challenging yet hugely rewarding Cliffhanger mountain road. Explore awe-inspiring landscapes by day and spend nights under the stars in camp. You'll also experience the hustle and bustle of Indian life as you descend into cities and enjoy some well-earned creature comforts when you stay on luxury houseboats. With all accommodation, breakfast and dinner arranged for you, all you need to do is focus on this extraordinary ride.

Why should I do it?

Ride through some of the most remote and spectacular landscapes on earth with the help of a guide who will take you away from the busier, more commercialised routes, and help you experience the Himalayan mountains at their best. The riding will be challenging but hugely rewarding and you'll return home feeling like you've conquered the world.

What experience do I need?

Confidence off-road is a must. The tour is 80% paved with sections not for the fainthearted.

How do I get involved?

Get in touch with Alex online at www. nomadicknights.com



EXPLORE SOUTHERN SPAIN

What is it?

A week-long tour through Spain's southernmost region. Andalucia is the ideal place to ride in the sun, no matter what time of year. This all-inclusive tour will help you explore the best this beautiful region has to offer. You'll be led by an experienced local guide and have all the accommodation booked for you, so all you have to do is enjoy the ride.

Why should I do it?

There's a reason why plenty of motorcycle manufacturers choose Andalucia as the location to launch their new bikes to the world's media. There's a seemingly endless supply of stunning roads, yearround sunshine, and spectacular coastal and mountain landscapes to experience. Trust us when we say it's a superb place to ride. On this tour you'll explore plunging valleys, untouched national parks and twisting mountain passes. By night, you'll indulge in delicious local cuisine and experience the warmth of Spanish hospitality.

What experience do I need?

Not much. The tour is entirely road based so as long as you enjoy riding stunning roads in the sunshine, it could be time to pack your bags.

How do I get involved?

Sign up at www.gsmotorcycletours.com/ countryside-tour, book your flights and let GS Motorcycle Tours do the rest.

DISCOVER THE BALKANS ON AND OFF ROAD

What is it?

Twelve days riding across some of the most remarkable scenery the Balkans has to offer. Tackle gravel and asphalt roads in Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Slovenia in small groups of six, led by two BMW certified tour guides, before immersing yourself in local culture and hospitality at the end of a day's ride.

Why should I do it?

A region with a rich and diverse history, the Balkans is becoming increasingly popular for those looking to adventure further afield within Europe. Starting in Slovenia, you'll climb through mountain villages and steep switchbacks, before dropping down into magnificent valleys and finally onto Croatia's stunning

Dalmatian coast road. With a focus on mixing culture and cuisine with superb riding, this is an adventure that doesn't stop when your engine does.

What experience do I need?

You'll spend 40% of your riding time on gravel roads so you'll need to be confident handling an adventure bike on unpaved roads. Alkemist Adventures, who run the tour, also offer a two-day training course before you set off, to up your skills ahead of the big adventure.

How do I get involved?

Get in touch with the guys at Alkemist Adventures on their website www. alkemistadventures.com/guided-motorcycle-tours-in-europe/the-grand-adventure.



RIDE THE MIGHTY TRANSFÄGÄRÄŞAN

What is it?

An eight-day guided tour through the Romania's Carpathian Mountains, including the famous Transfăgărășan and Transalpina passes. You'll get to experience the best of Romania's famous Transylvania region, complete with a visit to Dracula's castle. All meals are included, with four and five-star accommodation waiting to be enjoyed at the end of a day's ride.

Why should I do it?

There are few better combinations than mountains and motorbikes. With the Carpathian Mountains following an almost 1,000-mile arc through much of Eastern Europe and 50% of the range found in Romania, it's no surprise that so many exhilarating mountain passes are

nestled amongst these peaks. Romania also offers a change from familiar central European tour destinations. You'll find yourself visiting medieval towns and sampling traditional cuisine, as well as spending a night enjoying the delights of a five-star winery.

What experience do I need?

The tour is road-based so as long as you're comfortable riding for between five and seven hours each day on some challenging mountain roads, it will be a blast.

How do I get involved?

Book your place by emailing Maria at office@romaniamotorcycletours. com or visit the Romania Motorcycle Tours website on www. romaniamotorcycletours.com.



IDENTIFY AND SET OF THE FORMS ON NORWAY'S WEST COAST

What is it?

A 15-day guided tour taking you through the most majestic scenery and remarkable roads in Europe, if not the world. Starting in northern Denmark, you'll cross into Norway to explore the fjords and coastal areas including the spectacular road to Lysefjord and the Trollstigen mountain pass. Bed and breakfast is included each day, as well as ferry crossings in Norway, as you climb further North on the Atlantic Ocean Road.

Why should I do it?

Norway is a deceptively vast country that offers an embarrassment of riches for bikers. When planning your own trip, it can be easy to miss out on

much of what makes it so special. With experienced guides, you won't miss out on any of the stunning scenery and twisting roads this part of the world is has to offer.

What experience do I need?

The emphasis on this tour is put on enjoying the sights and making memories, but you'll need to be able to ride multiple hairpin bends up and down mountain sides.

How do I get involved?

Get in touch with Mad Hatter Motorcycle Adventures at www. madhattertours.com/norway.





THE ANCIENT SILK ROAD THROUGH KYRGYZSTAN

What is it?

Two weeks venturing deep into Kyrgyzstan, a rugged and untouched Central Asian country on the famous ancient Silk Road. You'll come to realise that Kyrgyzstan is a biker's paradise for those willing to explore off the beaten track, although you'll be grateful for the assistance of the ride leader and support vehicle on a trip that is guaranteed to push you out of your comfort zone.

Why should I do it?

Get a taste of the life of an overland adventurer without having to quit your job. Exploring the exotic landscapes and cultures of Kyrgyzstan will be the adventure of a lifetime.

What experience do I need?

About 30% of the journey on dirt roads so some off-road experience is preferable. The driving standards and paved road quality are likely to be a far cry from Europe too, so confidence and bike fitness are musts when riding for 14 days in a row.

How do I get involved?

To book this bucket list adventure get in touch with Compass Expeditions online at www.compassexpeditions.com/ tours/kyrgyzstan-explorer.



RIDE THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY IN IRELAND

What is it?

A week-long tour on the island of Ireland exploring sections of the Wild Atlantic Way, before catching some motorcycle racing action such as the North West 200 and Armoy. Based in a cosy bed and breakfast in the heart of the County Down countryside, you'll spend five days riding out and exploring the local area led by an experienced local guide, before settling down and watching others push their bikes to the limit.

Why should I do it?

Touring the island of Ireland is among the most fun you can have on two wheels. Enjoy beautiful surroundings, great roads, and the warmth of hospitality the Irish are quite rightly so famous for. With a chance to witness some motorcycle road racing in action, this tour will also appeal to the speed demons among you.

What experience do I need?

Some road riding experience is all you need. You'll ride your own bike, but you'll be sticking to tarmac and won't be expected to pull long days in the saddle. You'll return home feeling refreshed after this one.

How do I get involved?

Get in touch with Ed at www. ednimtours.com/#overview.



TRAIL RIDING IN PORTUGAL

What is it?

Trail riding on Portugal's rugged Silver Coast with guided daily rideouts to exploring the dirt and sand trails that criss-cross the area. You can choose from one, two, or three-days riding, making this the perfect weekend adventure. You'll be based in the city of Figueria da Foz, which is nestled on the coast between Porto and Lisbon airports, giving you plenty of options for flights from the UK.

Why should I do it?

Portugal has a wealth of riches when it comes to dirt biking, with enough superb trails to last a lifetime. However, if you're new to the country, it can be tricky knowing exactly where to go to make the of your time away. On this tour, you'll benefit from the knowledge of an experienced local guide and have a bike provide, so all you need to do is concentrate on perfecting your power slide.

What experience do I need?

Off-road experience is preferred. There are a variety of trail difficulties and your guide will never take you too far out of your comfort zone.

How do I get involved?

Get in touch with Intrepid Trails at www.intrepedtrails.com, book a Thursday evening flight to Portugal and enjoy the perfect three day weekend.

YAMAHA OFF-ROAD EXPERIENCE

What is it?

Learn the art of adventure riding on a range of Yamaha bikes, including the new Ténéré 700. Based in Mid Wales, Yamaha's Off-Road Experience offers a chance for novices and experts alike to develop their skills under expert guidance.

Why should I do it?

Riding off road is brilliant fun and opens up a whole new world of motorcycling. The best way to learn is on a dedicated course with expert instructors who'll teach you the skills and techniques you need to ride with confidence in the dirt safely. There are courses to suit all levels of rider, from complete beginners to those with some

trail riding experience who want to take their skills to the next level. And, we can't think of many better bikes to learn on than the new Ténéré 700.

What experience do I need?

None. Ideally, you'll have experience on a geared bike, but those who have never ridden a bike before can also get involved, just give the team a call before you turn up.

How do I get involved?

Head over to the town of Llanidloes in Wales to take part. You can even bring your own bike if you'd like to stick to the familiar. Contact the team at www. yamaha-offroad-experience.co.uk.



10 SEEK ENLIGHTENMENT IN NORTHERN INDIA

What is it?

Fourteen days in the shadows of the towering Himalayas. Starting in Delhi, the capital of India, your guide will lead you on a journey into the heart of Northern India. You'll visit a selection of religious sites and Hindu temples dotted amongst the mountains, including a sacred temple sitting at 3,300 metres above sea level. You'll certainly experience the spiritual side of motorcycle travel.

Why should I do it?

In 1968 the Beatles made the journey to Rishikesh, the yoga capital of the world, in search of meditation and enlightenment. While their visit inspired some of their most creative song writing, yours is certain to open your mind and expose you to some of the most awe-inspiring scenery in the world. Riding snaking trails between colossal Himalayan mountains is an experience most of us only dream of, but this is the chance to make that dream come true.

What experience do I need?

Road and driving standards are different to those in Europe, so plenty of road riding experience and confidence is a must. Your guides will assist with any language barriers, and high-quality accommodation is arranged to give you the best rest at the end of a riding day.

How do I get involved?

Email the team at support@ goodwindmotototurs.com or visit www.goodwindmototours.com.



THE TOUR OF A LIFETIME IN AFRICA

What is it?

An unforgettable 24-day tour in Africa. Starting in Cape Town, South Africa, you'll move up into Namibia and across to Botswana, experiencing the magic of riding on this majestic continent. The riding will include a mix of paved and gravel roads and pass through areas where you have the chance to see elephants from the saddle. All your accommodation is arranged for you all you have to do is ride and soak up magnificent sites such as the Okavango Delta and Victoria Falls.

Why should I do it?

Africa is far removed from the familiarity of Europe, and can be quite intimidating for travellers who haven't

travelled there before. But with expert local guides and the aptly named Honda XRV750 Africa Twin to tackle the terrain on, there's no better way to immerse yourself in the magic of the continent.

What experience do I need?

Some off-road riding experience is handy. You'll be tackling gravel roads in unfamiliar surroundings, so being confident you can handle an adventure bike on the trails is important.

How do I get involved?

Get your tickets to Cape Town booked and get in touch with Ride Down South at www.ridedownsouth.com/cape-town-namibia-vic-falls.





12 LOOP IRELAND AND WATCH THE ISLE OF MAN CLASSIC TT

What is it?

A comprehensive, self-guided group tour exploring the very best that Ireland has to offer before a short ferry to catch the Isle of Man Classic TT Races in the flesh. Your route will take you along parts of the world's longest coastal route, the Wild Atlantic Way, with an option to rent a bike if required.

Why should I do it?

A trip around Ireland promises to be as much fun off the bike as on it, and two weeks is plenty of time to see what it has to offer. Your trip will take you to the Cliffs of Moher, the famous Ring of Kerry and finally a motorcycling Mecca on the Isle of Man. In the evenings you can enjoy the craic in friendly local pubs with the rest of your group.

What experience do I need?

General road riding experience. Expect to cover about 200 miles a day, all on tarmac. You'll stay away from busy roads that are frequented by coach tours, so you may find yourself riding narrower lanes at a gentle pace and leaving the racing to the professionals on the Isle of Man.

How do I get involved?

Book online at www. lemonrockbiketours.com/tour/ classic-isle-of-man-tt-races-andwild-atlantic-way.



13 RIDE THE AMERICAN WEST

What is it?

A must-do on any biker's bucket list. Your bike is shipped to the USA ahead of 20 days riding. Starting in California, you'll ride through the American West with your guide, stopping at the likes of the Grand Canyon and Death Valley, all on your own motorcycle. With all the legwork, including shipping, done for you, all you need to do jump on a flight to start your Stateside tour.

Why should I do it?

The opportunity to tackle this incredible country on your own set of wheels with expert guidance is one that is hard to pass up. Riding through the American West is an unforgettable experience, with so many natural wonders to

explore, your eyes will be feasting on something spectacular every day. Staying in motels and eating in traditional diners, you'll also see the best of American hospitality, while your guide will steer you away from big chains towards authentic, local businesses.

What experience do I need?

Your tour will stick to the blacktop so, while you should be comfortable and confident riding all day across a three-week tour, the focus will be on enjoying the experience rather than pushing your or your bike to the limit.

How do I get involved?

Contact Chris at chrisunchained@ gmail.com or visit their website at www. unchainedtours.com.



What is it?

Nineteen days of adventure riding, tackling Northern Pakistan which is home to some of the world's most spectacular mountain ranges, including the Karakoram and the Himalayas. Your guide will serve as a translator and cultural guide along the way. Off the bike you'll enjoy the warmth of hospitality this region is known for as you stay in a mix of homestays, hotels and campground.

Why should I do it?

A gateway to South East Asia, Northern Pakistan is bursting with opportunities for the adventure rider wanting to explore the world. With a healthy mix of paved and un-paved roads, each day will be challenging yet hugely rewarding

experience as you traverse remote mountains passes and experience adventure riding at its very best. Pakistan is very much an emerging tourist destination, and you'll meet people who rarely see tourists passing through their village.

What experience do I need?

This is a four for those looking for adventure. Off-roading and adventure riding experience is a must. You'll be riding over a long period of time on a variety of road surfaces, with river and creek crossings necessary.

How do I get involved?

Get in touch with Karakoram Bikers at www.karakorambikers.com/pure-pak.



15 EXPLORE THE BEST OF THE ALPS

What is it?

Nine days of riding through the Alps experiencing magnificent mountain passes and exploring picturesque Alpine towns and villages. Starting and finishing in Nice, you'll pass through the Cote d'Azure and Monaco before climbing into the Alps. During seven days of riding you'll experience some of the best riding Europe has to offer while spending each evening relaxing over a delicious dinner and enjoying the local wines.

Why should I do it?

There's reason the Alps is so a popular destination for bikers – it's home to magnificent motorcycling roads twisting their way through some of the most spectacular landscapes on Earth. With expert

local guides, daily routes, and your bed, breakfast and dinner arranged for you, all you'll need to do is follow the tour guide to wind your way through the scenery. Being on the border of France and Italy, you'll be immersed in the unique Alpine culture and cuisine.

What experience do I need?

Riding mountain passes is fun but challenging. As long as you've got some road experience, you're certain to enjoy the tour. If you do struggle, the guide can provide feedback on how to improve your skill.

How do I get involved?

Call McTours on 0333 577 0230 or 0141 416 0230 or visit https://mc.tours/t100.



16 EXPLORE VIETNAM ON ENDURO BIKES

What is it?

Choose from three incredible 14-day tours that enable you to tackle the best of what Vietnam has to offer. A trip across the border from Vietnam to Laos, the North Vietnamese mountains or riding the historic Ho Chi Minh Trail. All trips include airport transfers, hotels, breakfast and dinner on riding days, a support vehicle for your luggage, water and two English speaking guides.

Why should I do it?

Vietnam needs little introduction and is rapidly becoming a popular destination for travellers. Exploring the country on two wheels helps you to get away from the hustle and bustle of crowded tourist spots. Whether you're discovering Buddhist temples, viewing incredible scenery, or experiencing local tribal culture, this tour will ensure you get to explore the very best of Vietnam

What experience do I need?

All tours involve a degree of off-road riding, with the Ho Chi Minh trail 25% dirt and the other two tours 50% off-road. However, you'll be tackling the trails on the perfect bikes, lightweight Honda CRF250s or Kawasaki KLX250s, and all luggage will be carried separately, so they will be manageable for those less confident on the dirt.

How do I get involved?

Book online at www. guidedmotorbiketours.co.uk/far-east-Tours.



17 TOUR THE SOUTH OF FRANCE IN STYLE AND COMFORT

What is it?

A relaxing motorcycling holiday in the South of France ideal for you and your better half. Stay in a beautifully converted farmhouse in the Occitane area of France, using it as a base to explore the surrounding countryside, villages and superb biking roads on offer. Also, take the chance to relax by the pool and spend some quality time together off the bike.

Why should I do it?

If you're looking for a motorcycle holiday that combines fantastic riding with the opportunity to relax and enjoy delicious food, great wine, and the laid-back French lifestyle. It's also perfect if your pillion doesn't want to

spend all day, every day in the saddle. Leave them to enjoy the facilities on offer while you make the most of the riding opportunities available during the daily guided ride outs.

What experience do I need?

This trip isn't designed to push you to your limits but instead it offers the chance to enjoy exploring rural France at a relaxed pace. It's the perfect way to combine your passion for motorcycling with a holiday in the sun.

How do I get involved?

Get in touch with Mad Hatter Motorycle Adventures online at www. madhattertours.com/france.





Rent a Hertz Ride bike and get adventurous in the USA.

Now you can rent a motorcycle at Hertz Ride in Las Vegas and Riverside, CA. We also offer a variety of motorcycle tours, either being guided or self guided, so you can venture at the most iconic landscapes, like Route 66, Best of California or Miami & Deep South.

Book your favorite destination at www.hertzride.com.

The tour of a lifetime starts here.

18 RIDE FROM INDIA TO LONDON

What is it?

An epic 50-day trip covering 16 countries and two continents, beginning in Imphal in northern Indian, through China, South East Asia, Central Asia and Europe, before finishing triumphantly in London. Ride your own bike with a group of like-minded riders led by an experienced guide handling the planning, bureaucracy and routes.

Why should I do it?

Many of us dream of doing the 'big trip', the one you'll tell your grandkids about. But the logistics of such a trip are enormous and finding someone willing to share the journey with if you don't fancy riding alone is even tougher. By joining a group of fellow adventure riders, you'll share an unforgettable adventure and arrive in London rightfully able to call yourself a world tourer.

What experience do I need?

You'll spend almost three-months on the road riding some challenging terrain, so having some off-road experience and bike fitness will prove beneficial.

How do I get involved?

Mount your GoPro to capture the action and get in touch with the team at Viktorianz to book yourself on this once in a lifetime trip: www. viktorianz.com/euro-asian-road-trip.



19 Enjoy your first bike tour in wales

What is it?

A leisurely four-day tour in Wales, ideal for those looking to begin a life of motorcycle travel in comfortable and familiar surroundings. Staying in hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation, your guide will help you explore Snowdonia's stunning mountain scenery and surrounding areas on some of the best roads the UK has to offer.

Why should I do it?

Heading abroad on a bike tour can be a daunting experience, exposing yourself to new cultures, languages, and rules of the road. While this is ultimately fun, it can be a tough challenge. This tour of Wales gives you the chance to try out

touring at home. An experienced guide will show you the best of Wales by day, while evenings are spent enjoying the company of like-minded riding partners.

What experience do I need?

None. The trip is focussed on those looking to hone their all-day riding skills and begin touring. There will also be plenty for experienced riders to enjoy and it could be a great way to introduce a friend or loved one to your passion for bike travel, with women riders especially welcome.

How do I get involved?

Reach out to the UK Motorbike Tours team at www.ukmotorbiketours.co.uk/mountainous-wales.



20 EXPERIENCE A TASTE OF THE DAKAR IN SOUTHERN PORTUGAL

What is it?

Trail riding in the Alentejo and Algarve regions of Portugal. The six-day tour will provide five riding days on a network of seemingly endless trails that criss-cross these sun-kissed regions. Aiming to give you a comfortable 'mini-Dakar' experience, you'll set off with your own SatNav each day allowing you to ride at your own pace, before finishing in beautiful surroundings at rural hotels or country houses where you can enjoy local wines, food and share stories from the day's ride.

Why should I do it?

Portugal is world renowned for its incredible off-road riding opportunities, but did you know that the final European-African Dakar Rally in 2007 actually started in Lisbon? During your tour, you'll be able to experience a taste of the trails that were tackled on that final course as you snake your way through this sun-kissed landscape. Your evenings will be anything but 'Dakar' however, with stays in beautiful rural lodgings to unwind after a great day's ride.

What experience do I need?

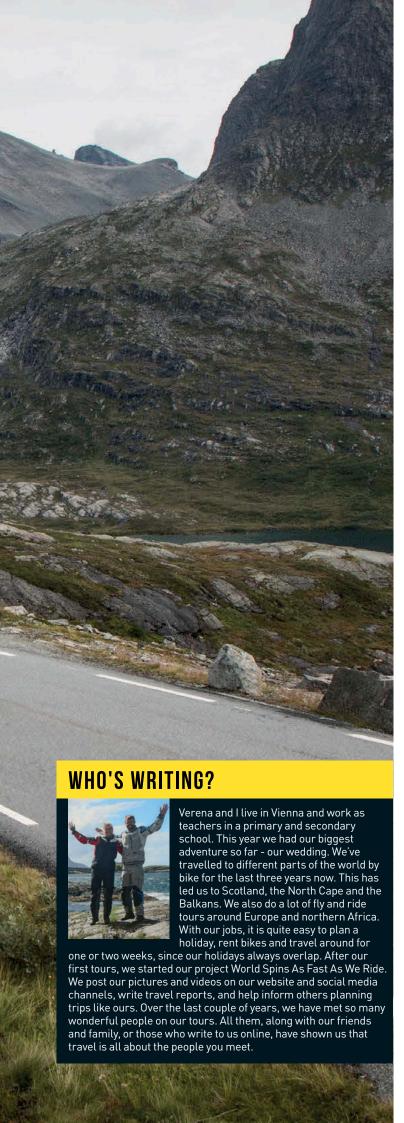
Off-road experience and off-road bike fitness are strongly recommended. Although there's no pressure to ride beyond your capability.

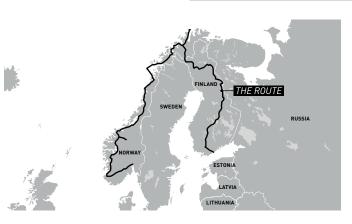
How do I get involved?

Drop João an email at info@ horizonadventures.pt or visit www. horizonadventures.pt to find out more about the Atlantic Odyssey Tour.









"H

eads down!" the loading master called out to us at the freight terminal of Vienna's Central Railway Station. We'd ridden there that morning from our home in the city. At walking speed, Verena and I wobbled along the freight cars on our bikes. We were reminded of the beginning of a previous trip we'd taken in

Scotland, that mix of anticipation, excitement and nerves. Both of us stood at the platform and watched our motorcycles being lashed down on a train, marking the beginning of our new adventure.

Ahead lay four weeks of riding aboard our two BMW R1200 GS bikes. Our plan was to ride dirt roads and sections of the Trans Euro Trail north through Finland to Norway, where we would reach Nordkapp, the most northerly point in Europe you can ride to. We then planned to travel south west along Norway's wild Atlantic coast, excited by the thought of riding through some of the most spectacular landscapes in the world. But first, we had to leave Austria and travel through Germany.

With a gentle knock on the cabin door, we were woken up punctually at 7am by the train attendant, arriving well rested in the German city of Hamburg. We already knew the city well from previous visits, so we skipped the sightseeing and had a leisurely breakfast instead.

While planning our trip, we decided to take the ferry from Travemünde, which is 55 miles away from Hamburg, to Helsinki in Finland. Therefore, we relaxed for the rest of the day at the promenade and stocked up on provisions for the two-day crossing of the Baltic Sea. The engines of the Finnstar ferry were already humming when we boarded at midnight.

About 35 hours and 611 nautical miles later we arrived in Helsin-ki. We rode off the ferry and after a few miles on smaller roads, we quickly left Helsinki behind and started our journey on the Trans Euro Trail. The TET, as it is widely known, stretches across most of Europe, including up the length of Finland, on unpaved roads and trails. We were facing the first off-road adventure of our lives. We set our bikes to Enduro mode and covered the first miles on gravel. From now on, we would only head in one direction, north!

Soon enough, we reached the Finnish Lake District which features more than 180,000 bodies of water. It is rich in moors and forests and covers an area of over 385,000 square miles. In this area, there were plenty of smaller side trails to explore, leading to numerous small bays, beaches and other hidden places waiting to be discovered. After the first 160 miles or so of riding through this stunning landscape, we stopped in the town of Tommolansalmi and pitched our tent for the first time on a small but inviting campsite.

As is the case on all our trips, we quickly divvied up the tasks to set up camp and we were ready to relax within minutes. We noticed how much we had missed this daily travel routine - setting



up tents, getting into comfy clothes and being mesmerized by the beautiful landscape.

The following days were a blur of blue skies, sunshine and superb riding over countless gravel roads and trails through the untouched and remote forests of Finland. We were left speechless by the natural beauty of this vast country. We rode ever further north, past the town of Nurmes and onto the village of Vuokatti, finding a fantastic camp site next to a lake and so we went for a refreshing swim. Although there were plenty of miles still between us and the Arctic Circle, the sun did not set below the horizon. The days were much longer than back home in Austria and we were able to enjoy basking in the sunshine at a jetty on the lake until 11pm, before it hid behind a hill.

The next section of our journey took us along the border of Finland and Russia. Museums and old war relics, including an old helicopter, were reminders of the conflict that took place in this area during World War Two.

Our route led us right through this historical terrain and past the winter sports resorts of Kuusamo and Rovaniemi. We had now arrived in Lapland, the land of reindeer and the midnight sun. Lapland's climate is extreme. Temperatures reach 30C in summer and well below -30C in the cold, dark winters. Further north, you need to keep a close eye on your fuel gauge as the distances between petrol stations grows longer and longer. After the town of Salla, there was no guaranteed fuel supply for the next 200 miles.

After travelling further north, with plenty of photo stops and breaks to soak up our spectacular surroundings, we decided to take a shortcut marked on the navigation system. At first, everything seemed to meet our expectations, but the joy soon came to a sudden end. Deep sand, mud and puddles forced us to turn around. It was 30 miles one-way off road and back again. Bathed in sweat and with nerves frayed, we eventually reached an asphalt road. That road was the most beautiful thing in the world to me at that moment (sorry Verena, but I know you felt the same).

Exhausted, we finally arrived in Levi, one of the biggest and bestknown winter resorts in Finland. We felt it was time to have a bikefree day, so we swapped our motorcycle boots for hiking shoes and explored the area on foot. We came skiing here two years ago and the difference between visiting in winter and summer is remarkable. In winter, the sun is rarely seen and even if it is, then only for what feels like a brief moment. In summer, it is the opposite, so we decided to go up the mountain for a midnight stroll and enjoy the sun. The view was breathtaking.

We enjoyed our day off but it was soon time to resume our journey. As we headed deeper into the Arctic Circle, we saw more and more wildlife crossing our path and plenty of signs warning us about moose in the area. We certainly didn't want to end up hitting one of those huge animals. Often, we caught ourselves simply marvelling at the vastness of the landscape and paying far too little attention to the road. We were reminded of the need to keep our wits about us when we were surprised by a herd of reindeer dash-



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A VIEW OF GEIRANGERFJORD







ing across the road, unimpressed by the noise of our bikes.

Continuing along gravel trails, our route led us to the village of Hetta, and from there, onto highway 93 to the Norwegian border. On the one hand we were happy to have ridden the length of Finland, but we were also a little bummed because the off-road riding we loved so much had come to an end. However, we didn't feel down for long because we knew we were nearing our goal. Nordkapp was near!

We rode along the smooth surface of highway E45, past small lakes and rivers, north to the city of Alta. From here, it was only 150 miles to Nordkapp. Our final push took us along a dead-straight road through a barren landscape. Thankfully, from Olderfjord, the E69 turns into an unbelievable coastal road with spectacular views.

Around noon, we finally reached our destination, Nordkapp. It felt a little unreal. We had dreamed of reaching this point on our motorcycles for so long and now it was finally here. To the left and right of the road we could see countless reindeer going about their business.

Thankfully, there weren't too many people around which meant we were able to enjoy the atmosphere in peace. It was a special moment for both of us. A short ride away, we pitched our tent at the northernmost campsite in the world, Kirkeporten Camping. For us, it was the perfect starting point for the activities we had planned over the next two days, including the absolute highlight, the hike to the Knivskjelodden headland. This point is about a mile further north than Nordkapp, making it the actual northern end-

point of mainland Europe. The hike is quite long at around 12 miles, but it is not difficult or dangerous. The view onto Nordkapp plateau was simply breath-taking.

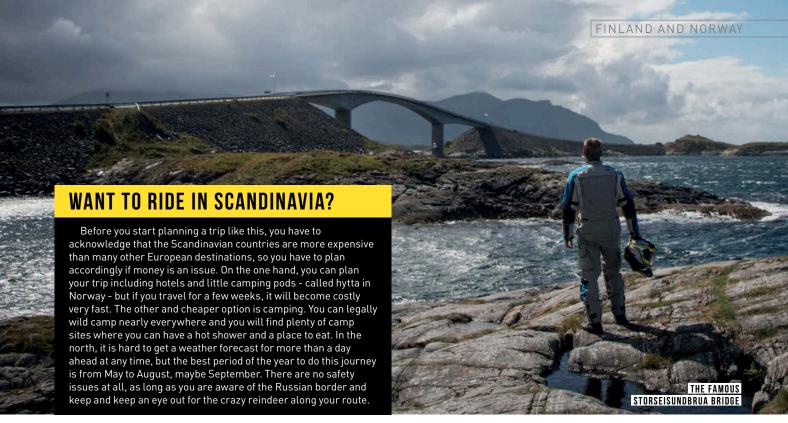
One thing we had to do of course was to take a photo with our motorcycles in front of the Nordkapp globe, the sculpture that has marked the end of so many journeys to this remote part of the world. However, there was a problem. As long as the gates are open to visitors, you aren't allowed to drive up to the globe. That meant we could only take our photo between 1am and 6am. It was an early start but we took our chance to mark the grand finale of our adventure.

The following morning we packed our stuff and headed south, sad to be leaving Nordkapp behind, but happy to be continuing our adventure. The roads were empty and the surface was smooth as we rode towards the Norwegian city of Tromsø. I was enjoying the cool coastal air when I spotted something in the water.

"Verena! Whales!" I shouted over the intercom. What a spectacle. A herd of pilot whales was circling peacefully about 100m off the coast. The water was as smooth as glass and we watched them undisturbed for several minutes before they dove into the blue ocean again. It was a magnificent sight.

Shortly before we reached Tromsø, we caught a ferry and walked onto the deck to enjoy the fresh breeze. The warm temperatures made it feel more like being in Greece or Italy, than Norway.

Along the E8 and E10 highways, we finally came to the Lofoten archipelago. This world-famous collection of around 80 islands,





A FISHING VILLAGE
ON THE NORWEIGAN COAST

the largest of which are connected by bridges or tunnels, is one of the most visited areas of Norway for a very good reason. The sight of the mountains towering more than 1,200m above the sea is breath–taking. I couldn't help but smile as a I rode passed charming fishing huts and along beautifully curving roads. After passing the towns and villages of Evenskjer, Svolvaer and Henningsvaer, we pitched our tent at a cosy campsite near the ferry port at Moskenes at the far end of Lofoten.

You could easily spend two weeks on the islands alone. Behind every bend is a picture-postcard view just waiting for you. Before we began our trip, friends had advised us to hike the popular Reinebringen trail. The view from this 442m-high peak overlooking the village of Reine is one of the most iconic in Lofoten. Despite its popularity, you need to be fit to hike the trail. It leads you along a steep path, over boulders, through boggy earth and along intimidating cliff edges. The last ascent before the peak was exhausting and we were out of breath, but the view was worth the effort a thousand times over.

On the day of our departure from Lofoten, we were rudely awoken by the loud scream of seagulls. As we opened the tent, we saw what had caused the ruckus. A fishing boat was returning to the harbour with a swarm of hungry seagulls in tow. Punctually, at 8am, our ferry left and we enjoyed a last glimpse on the islands from the ship. Arriving in the port of Bodø, we were already looking forward to the next section of our journey. Earlier in the trip we had met Loke who was riding a Honda CBR 125. He told us

not to ride on the main E6 highway, but to take the smaller FV17 to Steinkjer instead. Despite this adding a few miles to our journey, we made the decision to follow Loke's advice and were rewarded with yet more spectacular views.

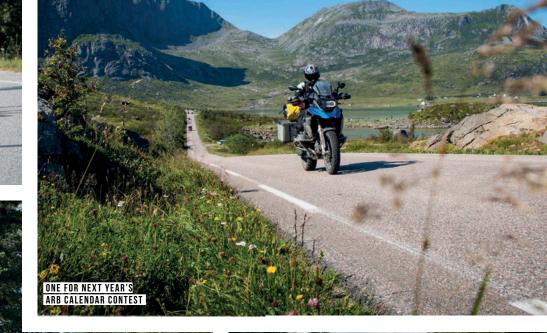
The road led us through numerous tunnels and six ferries as we passed through the stunning landscapes of Namdalen, Helgeland and Salten. The last few miles on the E6 before reaching the city of Trondheim turned out to be harder than expected through busy city traffic, so we were happy to finally reach the campsite. It was early afternoon and we spent the rest of the day exploring the city on foot.

The canal port area was created in the middle of the 19th century as part of a new harbour plan for the city. On the south side of the Kanalhavna, you will see the colourful Trondheim warehouses on the waterfront. In the centre of the city there is a marketplace where we delved into a huge street-food festival, sampling plenty of treats as we explored.

Around 135 miles from Trondheim is the Atlanterhavsvegen (Atlantic Ocean Road), Norway's most famous road, which measures exactly 8,274m. It was a must-see attraction on our trip. The road features eight bridges linking several small islands and has become a world-famous tourist attraction, especially the famous Storseisundbrua Bridge, known for its distinctly curved shape. With a length of 260m and a height of 23m, it is the largest bridge on the Atlantic Road.

Another world-famous road we were excited to ride was just a









short ride away, the mighty Trollstigen mountain pass. Fog hung in the air as we approached from the town of Andalsnes to the north, but it soon showed its best side.

From the Trollstigen, we followed highway 63 south. Past the breath-taking views of Tafjord and onto Geirangerfjord, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most beautiful fjords in Norway. The sight of the snowcapped mountains plunging into the water is truly special. We sat and watched one of the huge cruise ships manoeuvring its giant bulk to moor.

We continued on, riding to the mountain top of Dalsnibba, which is 1,476m high. The ride there was frustrating because it was littered with so many tourist coaches, but the view from the summit was compensation enough. Our eyes feasted on a grandiose view of the Geirangerfjord that lay around four miles away.

We decided to take advantage of the good weather and pushed on south to Jørpeland. This place is the starting point for many tourists who want to visit the famous Preikestolen (Preacher's Chair), a steep cliff rising above a fjord with a large, flat summit. It made for yet another fantastic photo opportunity - Norway certainly has plenty of them.

We pitched our tent on a camp site only a few miles away and set our alarm for 3am in order to experience the view at sunrise. The 2.5-mile trail led first up a steep ridge and along a path through a swampy forest. After about an hour, we reached the platform of the Preikestolen. Only a few people, including those who had spent the night up there, enjoyed the uncanny

silence and watched the sunrise. There was almost a meditative atmosphere as we felt the first rays of sunshine on our faces. The view into the Lysefjord was stunning and it was an unforgettable moment in our trip. From the Preacher's Chair we rode to Oslo, the capital of Norway. We had planned to stay in a hotel as a reward for a previous exertions, but then we couldn't resist the charm of the Ekeberg camp site. The location offers a fantastic view over the whole of Oslo. We pitched our tent here for the remainder of our trip and, in great weather, we spent our last days sightseeing. Numerous sights, like the opera, the ski jump Holmenkollbakken and the ski museum, mean there is plenty to do if you have time to spare in Oslo. The Holmenkollen ski jump is considered the oldest ski jump in the world and in good weather conditions it also offers an excellent view over the capital. We will remember Oslo as a modern, progressive and lively city.

It was also the final destination on our trip. The journey to the North Cape and back had been an unforgettable experience and one of the most spectacular motorcycle rides of our lives. The sun shone brightly on that last day as we boarded a ferry at Oslo. It would take us to Kiel in Germany from where we would travel home to Vienna, Austria.

The seagulls screeched as the big diesel engines of the ColorLine ferry roared into life. We were both in a slightly melancholic mood. We enjoyed the cool sea breeze quietly one last time, reflecting on the many wonderful moments of our journey that were running through our minds. ABR





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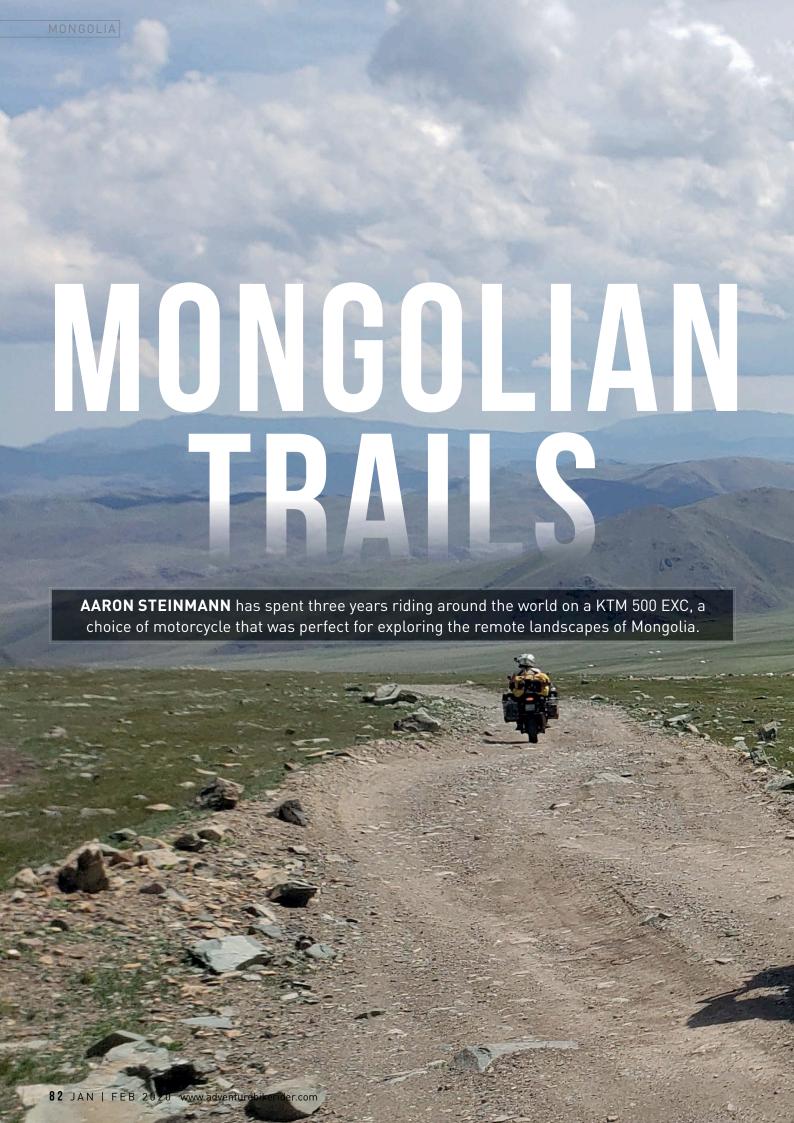
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WHO'S WRITING?



Aaron Steinmann. I've spent the last three years riding through 50 different countries around the world on my motorcycle, starting in New Zealand and riding to the top of Alaska. I then rode back to the lower 48 to ride some of the USA's Backcountry Discovery Routes through Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Colorado and Utah.

I took a break through the winter to work with a friend remodeling kitchens and bathrooms, but come early spring, I continued on to Toronto where I had my bike shipped to London. From London, I explored the UK and then headed to Morocco via the Trans Euro Trail. I then came back through Europe, the Balkans and Russia to Magadan.

You can follow Aaron on Instagram @braaping kiwi. As of writing this piece, he was in Perth and was about to travel across to Australia and back to New Zealand.

e have a problem," I heard from behind me.

I turned around to see the Mongolian money changer who had given me a shitty exchange rate on a €50 note 15 minutes earlier.

"We have a problem," he repeated, running his finger over the ruffled edge of the note before trying to hand it to me.

I wasn't going to touch it and replied "Nah, there's no problem mate," and I continued to put my jacket on.

He placed the €50 note on the seat of my bike. The wind blew it on the ground. I still wasn't going to touch it. He finally stooped down to grab it and again told me we had a problem. This time he sounded grumpier.

"We had a deal," I replied. "I don't see a problem."

I looked over at one of the people I had entered the border with and told them I'd meet them down the road. I quickly threw my helmet on and got out of there, waiting about 2 miles down the road while my friends sorted out sim cards for their phones.

It wasn't long before I saw my friends coming. One flew by while another stopped just long enough to yell at me to get going fast. I looked back to see a car in the distance with a trail of dust behind it. I was pretty sure it was the money changer with a couple of his mates. 'Oh shit,' I thought. 'Now we have a problem.'

I took off pretty confident that a car wasn't going to catch a 500cc motorcycle on a fast gravel road and I put a gap on them pretty quickly. However, 10 minutes later I looked at the upcoming bridge to see two guys standing on it waving their hands above their heads. I figured the guy must have called ahead to his mates. Crap, we still have a problem.

What should I have done? Stopped and confronted them, or





WANT TO RIDE IN MONGOLIA

Mongolia is a cheap country to travel through accommodationwise. It is one of the biggest campgrounds in the world. You can pretty much set up your tent anywhere you like.

I found fuel pretty easy to find even in very remote places, but sometimes it wasn't the best octane rating, so when I found good fuel I always filled up. My food costs were minimal, but you don't come to Mongolia for the food. I ate more noodles and Snickers bars there than any other country I've been in.

I was there in July and had a mixture of weather, some quite hot days and some others where a thunderstorm would roll in late afternoon.

If you want to join a guided tour around Mongolia, where all of the logistics are taken care for you, Motorcycle Mongolia offers six tours through the country on 2020-model KTM 450 EXC Six Days. To find out more, head to www.motorcyclemongolia.com.

kept the throttle pinned? I have a feeling you know what I did. I dropped a gear and got out of there. That was my entrance into the vast country that is Mongolia. To tell the truth, it wouldn't have surprised me to find myself getting chased out of a country, but I never thought I would find myself getting chased into one.

We stopped at a gas station in Ulgii, the first city we came to after the border. Feeling a tad bad about making the other guys push all the way through to the city without stopping, I apologised. However, it turned out they also had a little altercation at the border and needed to get out of there pretty smartly as well.

I do most of my travelling alone, but I had met Holger, Janet and Ronny earlier in my trip in Kyrgyzstan and we had ridden together on and off ever since. Holger and Janet were two-up on a KTM 1090 Adventure. Ronny was on a KTM 1050 Adventure, while I was riding my little old KTM 500 EXC. They were fun people to travel and hang out with and it's nicer to drink with company around a campfire, so I don't feel so guilty for doing it alone.

After eating what turned out to be our last decent meal in a while, we headed out of town to camp at a spot we had seen on the map by a river. It looked like a perfect camping spot, but as soon as we stopped and took our helmets off the mosquitoes immediately swarmed around us making the area absolutely unbearable. I've never experienced anything like it. We were all pretty tired. It had been a long day crossing the border from Russia, but there wasn't any choice but to continue on.

We kept an eye out for a place to camp but everywhere was either too rocky, or by the mosquito-infested river. We decided to head north and inland towards Achit Lake, which sits at a higher altitude. We hoped there wouldn't be as many mosquitoes.

Just before we reached the lake, the road opened up into vast open plains. It was the type of terrain you see in photos of

Mongolia where you don't have to stick to the track, but instead point yourself in the general direction you need to go and make your way across the landscape. I looked over to the others as we picked our own paths across the plain. As tired as we all were, I knew they would be grinning under their helmets as much as I was, feeling the freedom and openness of Mongolia for the first time. The camping spot worked out well and we watched the sun go down with a few shots of vodka. I blame the Russians for that habit I picked up.

There are three main routes through Mongolia; the northern, the middle and the southern. The northern route is the more remote and isn't paved. It was the one we had decided upon. We headed out that morning working our way north, pleasantly surprised to find the rivers that were shown on my GPS were all dry and easy to cross. It meant we made pretty decent time.

We stopped at the first town we came across, fuelled-up and got some food. I didn't find there were too many big gaps between finding fuel in Mongolia, but at times there were big distances between finding decent octane rated fuel. For this reason, when I found good fuel, I would fill up my Giant Loop fuel bladder. If I knew there was another town ahead, I would only partly fill so I never ran pure on poor-quality gas.

What I did struggle with was the food. We tended to come across one or two shops that sold the basics, such as bags of two-minute noodles, water, Coke, bags of crisps, and luckily, usually Snickers bars.

The other option was so-called 'restaurants' that didn't have a menu and would serve you some dumpling type things with unknown meat filling them. I'm a pretty picky eater at the best of times, but after travelling through 50 countries, I can confidently say Mongolia was the hardest place to find decent, edible food.











The other option was simply going without. The advantage of this is, if you don't eat, you don't poo. This is an advantage because the loo situation in Mongolia was worse than the fuel and the gas. Some toilets were so bad I dug a whole and did the deed outside instead.

We continued riding and soon linked up with the northern route across Mongolia which, for the next few days, provided a little bit of everything. There were more wide-open plains, some nice tacky dirt roads, sand, gravel and a bit of mud, while the whole time we were surrounded by stunning scenery and hardly saw another soul.

We often encountered thunderstorms late in the day but we mostly had decent weather and, if anything, the rain kept the dust away and wasn't a big deal. A result of that rain was mud and, on one occasion, I saw Holger's front wheel dig in on the side of a puddle and he went down with Janet on the back. He is a very solid rider but on a fully-loaded big bike with two people, there wasn't much he could have done.

We picked up the bike, but Holger's hand had got caught under the bar and it looked like a knuckle had disappeared. We suspected his hand was broken which turned out to be the case.

Janet got on the back of Ronny's bike and, I take my hat off to Holger, because he toughened up and, without any moaning, he persevered on. That day we encountered more sand than any other day and it was pretty slow going with Janet having to walk a couple sections and Holger having to give his hand a rest at times. We did around 40 miles in eight hours and I was pretty damn thankful to be on my little light bike.

That night Holger made the sensible decision to change routes. The next day, he and Janet went to pick up the middle route and take that into Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. Ronny decided to stick with them which made sense in case Holger needed help. They were all flying out of Ulaanbaatar together

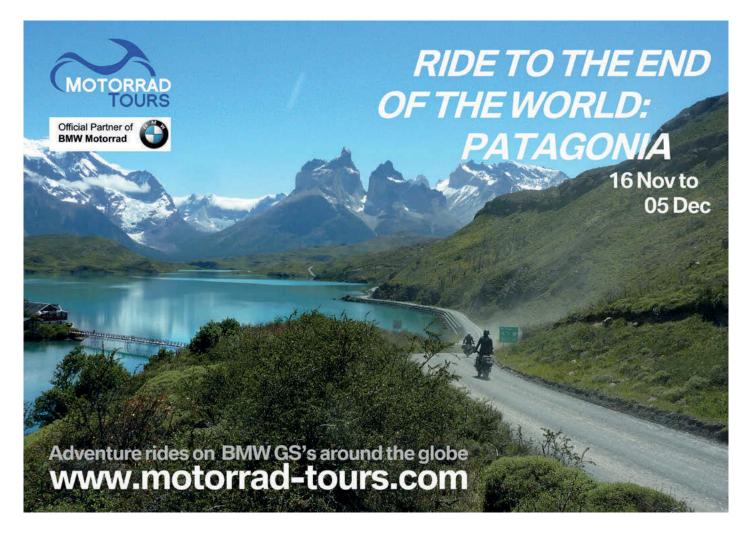
anyway. So that left me with a decision. Should I stay with my friends or stick to my current path? Honestly it wasn't that tough a decision. Although it was fantastic travelling with them, there is something about travelling alone that is both rewarding and satisfying. I felt like it was time for me to tackle some of this incredible country on my own.

Early the next morning we said our goodbyes, and before I knew it, I was back in the wilds of Mongolia heading down a dirt road alone. I stopped about an hour later as I had been keeping an eye on the hour meter on my bike. It flicked over the 1,500-hour mark so I stopped to take some photos. For me, it was a pretty big milestone. Standing there alone surrounded by silence, all of a sudden, this country seemed a whole lot bigger than it had the previous days and, to tell the truth, I felt a tad vulnerable. I was back to relying only on myself and my bike.

I don't carry any type of tracking device or a GPS but, for the first time, I thought perhaps it wouldn't be such a bad idea. I choose to travel without these items. I call it old school travel. Some might say it's stupid. Yes, it may not be the smartest thing to do, but the great thing about travel is we all have our own style. I choose to do it this way just like some choose to climb mountains solo or without ropes.

It wasn't long before I had another decision to make about my route. I could either stick north, where technically the northern route finishes in around 60 miles, before taking the road into Ulaanbaatar. Alternatively, I could do a massive diagonal and head down to Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park, which lays on the northern edge of the Gobi Desert. It was about 1,000 miles away and, without a set route, I would have to piece it together. That's the thing with Mongolia you can't just type into Google from A to B and expect it to show you.









I sat next to my bike at a little gas pump for about 20 mins eating peanuts and drinking a Coke while trying to decide. I knew reaching the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan would add another few days and it would be a mission. It would probably be easier to just carry on the way I was going, but each time I thought about the shorter easier route, I felt like I would regret it once I got into Ulaanbaatar. It's funny how your mind has these little discussions. Finally, I told myself I was here to adventure ride, so let's make this an adventure. How can I come to Mongolia and not see a Gobi? With that, the helmet went on and it was game time again.

That day, I found a groove on some amazing dirt roads, with lots of fifth and sixth gear stuff. One thing about travelling alone is I can always put in bigger distances more quickly. I only have my pace to worry about and I only need to stop when I want to.

Later that day, I rolled into the town of Tosontsengel. I had intended to get a room as I was going on three days without a shower, but after seeing my options, I brought some noodles and a couple of beers and found myself a fantastic place by the river to camp. I pulled out my fishing rod and walked down the river, casting more for the therapy of it than anything else.

The next day was shorter. After four days without a shower and a proper loo, I stopped early when I found a city and a room for the right price. I also had my first decent meal in over a week.

Feeling clean and refreshed, I got an early start the next day. To begin with the road was paved but then my map led me onto a dirt track and back into the middle of nowhere. It became slow going, with lots of second and third gear riding and the need to cross some dry riverbeds. I didn't see anyone for a couple hours and some of the terrain looked like it hadn't had much traffic in a while.

THE BIKE: KTM 500 EXC

My bike choice, the KTM 500 EXC, was questioned by a few when I bought it, including the salesperson when I told him what I was going to use it for. I knew for a start I didn't want something big and heavy that would be hard to pick up in the mud or sand, as I was travelling alone. I also wanted the fun factor, so I needed something bigger than a 250 and a bit more dirt orientated than say a KLR650.

The KTM 500 EXC seemed to be the perfect fit for me. I did have concerns about its comfort over long distances, fuel range and reliability. However, putting a bigger tank on it and an aftermarket Seat Concepts seat, along with frequent oil changes, helped with

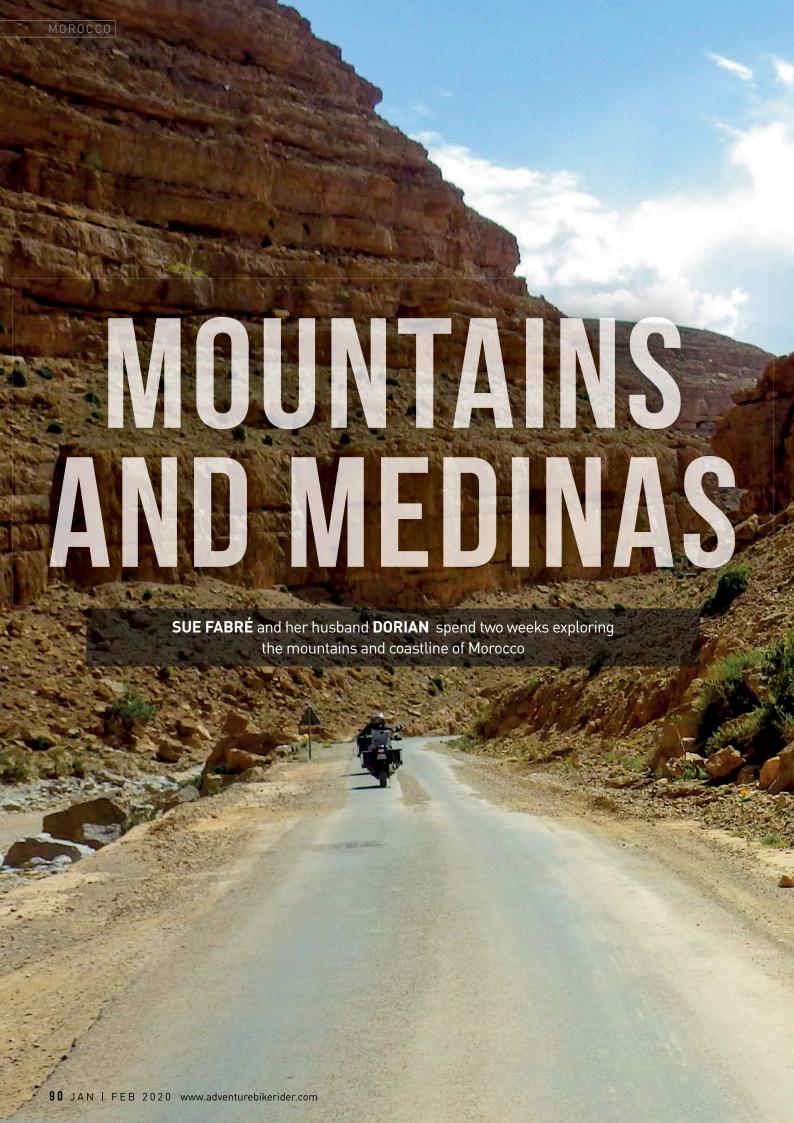
Over the years, I've added things like the Scotts' steering damper, Haan wheels, Renthal bars, a stiffer rear spring, Barkbusters, and break away levers, just to mention a few. I've been very happy with how the bike has held up. I think it has surprised many people and inspired them to go down the 'light is right' path.

I was a tad concerned, but after rechecking the maps, going back wasn't an option at this stage, so I continued forward. I had intended to camp that night, but at 5pm, I came into a little town with a howling wind and, through some sign language, managed to get a room in an office building of some type. It had no amenities other than a couple of single beds, but it had a window I could park my bike next to, so it was good enough for me. I tucked into Oreos and a Snickers bar for dinner.

The next day was the final push to the town of Dalanzadgad, located on the edge of the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park. It was one of the best days I've had on my bike. I rode on mostly open, fast terrain and I had one of those days where you feel like you just can't crash. The bike was on autopilot and it felt like nothing could go wrong. It's on days like this that I don't think you could pick a better bike to be on. It's just made for this terrain.

For the last half-an-hour, a thunderstorm rolled in and I got hammered by rain, but I didn't give a crap. I was on a high. I had made it. I had just crossed 1,000 miles diagonally across Mongolia since leaving the other guys. A total of 800 miles of that was on dirt. It was probably the most mentally challenging few days of travel I have had, navigating my way through one of the most remote landscapes in the world.

Mongolia has it all. Once you put up with the food, loos and days without showers, it rewards you with life-long memories of spectacular scenery, friendly people, amazing riding and a yearning to come back and do it all over again. Luckily for me, this wasn't the end of my time in Mongolia. I wasn't done with her and she wasn't done with me yet. ABR







e first visited Marrakech for a long weekend back in 2000. Before that visit, my husband Dorian had never mentioned anything about wanting a motorbike, but as we walked into the Jemaa El Fna, the huge square in the centre of the old town, two fully-loaded BMW adventure bikes

rode past us.

We saw them again later, parked at the side of the square, complete with tents, sleeping bags and water bottle holders on the panniers, and Dorian turned to me and said: "That's how I want to travel."

This encounter inspired Dorian to get his motorcycle licence and we've since ridden around the UK, Europe, USA, south-eastern Asia and even New Zealand, but only started talking about Morocco again in earnest this year, when our friend Jeff, a fellow BMW rider, said he wanted to go on a trip with us.

We decided on a late–September departure as the weather would be warm but not too hot, and most of the tourists from summer would have left, making the towns and roads less crowded. After months of planning on my part, including making flight and hotel bookings, buying ferry tickets and creating detailed routes and itineraries, Jeff dropped the bombshell that he couldn't make it. We decided we had put in too much effort to cancel everything, so we pushed ahead on our own. It was too exciting an adventure to miss out on.

As we could only take two weeks off from our busy self-employed jobs, we decided to forego the long ride through Spain on either end of the trip. Instead, we arranged for the motorbike to be trucked to Malaga, located on the south coast of Spain, where we would pick it up after flying out ourselves a few weeks later. We found the extremely helpful company Fly and Ride, based near London's Gatwick Airport, who organised it all for us, even recommending a trusty taxi driver to pick us up when we arrived in southern Spain.

The trip started with us changing into our bike gear in a dusty warehouse near the airport, then navigating the terrible one-way system through Malaga to our hotel, before riding to Algeciras and onto the ferry to Tanger Med in Morocco a couple of days later. We had everything we needed for the trip packed into two panniers, a top box and a Bridgestone roll-bag that we'd picked up for free at the Adventure Bike Rider Festival in July. We were ready for the adventure to begin.

I had read a few horror stories about customs at the Tanger Med port, but we were only kept waiting for an hour once we rode off the ferry. A Dutch couple on the only other motorbike on the ferry told us that they had made this crossing a number of times and things had become much easier in recent months. Although some of the cars from the ferry had to unload everything they had crammed into their boots, we were only asked to open one of our panniers and the guard lost interest quickly when we assured him we weren't carrying any weapons.

We were itching to get onto the Moroccan roads and they didn't disappoint, rising into sweeping bends over the hills as soon as we left the coast, with stunning mountain scenery stretching to the horizon. We had a short stop to pick up some local money in Tetouan where we found an ATM easily enough, but had to leave town via the steepest road that we had ever ridden down, before rejoining the road to Chefchaouen for the rest of the 75-mile ride to our first stop. The climb into the Rif mountains to Chefchaouen was as beautiful as we had been expecting, and it was made even better by the great quality of the roads. They were smooth and wide with very little traffic which made the twisting bends easy to navigate and allowed us to go at a slow and steady speed to take



in the stunning surroundings. The weather was perfect too, with long hours of sunshine and temperatures averaging in the high twenties during the first part of the trip.

I had booked our hotel in Chefchaouen based on a number of reviews that specifically mentioned how motorbike-friendly it was. We found it easily as we entered the bustling town. Dorian was about to park on the road outside the hotel when the owner ran out and insisted that we ride up the cobbled steps inside the hotel gates to park the bike securely. We were welcomed with mint tea and a beautiful room, then spent the rest of the day exploring Chefchaouen's picture-perfect medina. The blue-and-white buildings were spoilt only by the countless female tourists posing for photos in flowing dresses and floppy hats, looking seductively over their shoulders into the camera, then checking each picture carefully to make sure it was Instagram worthy. We found a welcome escape from this madness in a tiny, dark cafe with dusty bottles of wine lining the walls which had cold Casablanca beer on offer. As Moroccan towns have relatively few licenced bars, we ended up meeting the same band of Western tourists at every place we stopped that afternoon that served alcohol.

All riding nerves were gone by our second day and we couldn't wait to set off again to see more of this stunning country. The ride out of the Rif mountains was as spectacular as the ride in, and the beautiful landscape continued all the way to Fez. We finally saw other bikers on the road. There were at least 30 motorbikes spread across four or five groups, each with a support vehicle in tow. We

seemed to be the only solo bikers around at the time but we loved that we could stop where we chose, we could take wrong turns and not rush back to our planned route, and we could pull in for photos at every amazing view without feeling like we had to keep up with a group.

We took seven hours to ride the expected four-hour journey to Fez, but we arrived in the city feeling as though we could carry on for a few hours more. The car park we had programmed into the GPS didn't seem to exist, but a friendly policeman led us to some parking spaces outside a hotel on the edge of the medina. The car park attendant didn't mind us parking there and staying somewhere else, so we gave him a few dirhams and he promised to look after the bike for us. We later saw he'd moved his little plastic chair right next to the bike, so he obviously took his promise seriously.

We had a day off the bike in Fez where we did a cooking class in traditional Moroccan bread-making, set in a lovely ruined garden, which included a visit to the nearby communal oven. Later, after getting hopelessly lost in the sprawling medina and listening to terrible 80s Euro-pop in the bar at the old British Embassy, we were ready to ride again.

When I was planning our route back in England, I didn't just want to ride on the highways between the imperial cities that everyone visits on a typical tour of Morocco. I wanted to see the villages and countryside too. While researching routes, I came across some useful posts by a biker named Tim, who seemed to have excellent advice on everything from where to buy alcohol before



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the ferry crossing, to finding out about mountain pass closures in winter. I posted a question in a forum about recommended routes between Fez and the Todra gorge, my next must-see destination, and was thrilled when Tim responded with a perfectly planned route for me, complete with Google Maps links. We began the first of his recommended routes when we left Fez, and we were soon riding through fruit orchards, ski resorts and cedar forests, even spotting some wild Barbary apes by the side of the road. The provincial roads that Tim recommended were small but perfectly rideable and we were often the only vehicle for miles.

We spent a night in Khenifra at a soulless hotel that insisted they hadn't received the booking I'd made five months previously. They tried to turn us away before eventually giving us a room that the barman had let his friend stay in. We woke up looking forward to another day of Tim's recommended roads. We spent the day riding on small, provincial and regional roads over dramatic mountain passes to Imilchil, then over the Tizi Tinherhouzine pass into the awe-inspiring Todra gorge.

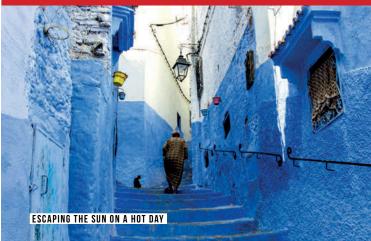
The gorge starts out quite wide but narrows to just 33 ft in places, with imposing limestone rocks rising on both sides. The road, while narrow, had been surfaced recently and was in good condition, other than in a few places where the tarmac had been washed away by seasonal rivers. With views this amazing, you wouldn't want to ride fast anyway. It was definitely a ride to savour. The gorge reminded me of the Siq, the narrow rock-hewn entrance to Petra in Jordan, only a darker shade of red and with scrubby growth peppering the roadside. Against the dazzling blue sky, it was quite a sight. We spent the evening at a beautiful but isolated hotel, right in the gorge, with our cave-room carved out of the mountainside. Sitting under the stars, drinking Moroccan red wine and eating wonderful locally-grown food, we felt very fortunate indeed.

As we left the gorge behind the next day, we started heading west through landscapes that looked more like Mordor than Morocco. We rode through countless Berber villages with terracotta buildings crumbling into the road, full of excitable boys that made revving motions and gave us high-fives as we passed, the beautiful girls only smiling shyly. This turned out to be a hard day. An intermittent ABS fault on the bike and not-so-intermittent fault with Dorian's stomach meant we started late and needed to take more stops than planned.

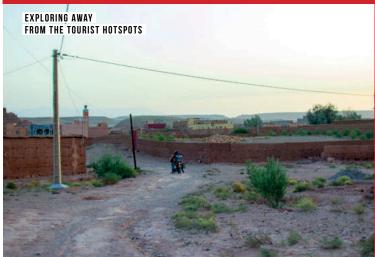
A sign we passed at around 1pm declared it was 43.7C even in this cooler season, and we certainly felt it. We soaked our jackets and gloves in cold water at every stop and switched off our intercoms so that we could ride with our visors fully open, but it was still draining. As we were nearing Ouarzazate with only an hour of riding left, we were stopped at a police roadblock. We had seen plenty of them so far and were usually waved through with a thumbs-up, but we were told at this one that we had been going over the speed limit of 60 kph (37 mph), thinking we were comfortably under the limit of 80 kph (50 mph) that our GPS had indicated. Thankfully, the policemen were fellow bikers and let us off with a friendly warning after inspecting our passports and logbook. We made sure we didn't rely on the GPS speed limits after that. Then, just as we thought we were almost at our destination, the heavens opened and we were drenched with heavy rain. This was something we were completely unprepared for as we rode on the former caravan route between the Sahara and Marrakech. The road became so slippery that we had to slow down even more, but thankfully the rain only lasted 15 minutes and it was then back to unrelenting sunshine again.

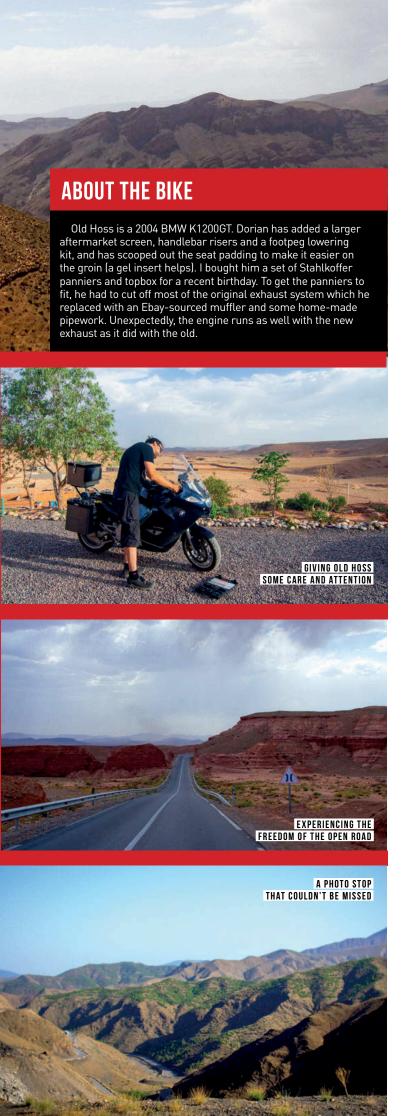
With three long days of riding on interesting and sometimes challenging roads behind us, we were looking forward to another day off the bike and the old Kasbah of Ait Benhaddou was the perfect place to unwind. Our riad was a beautiful family-run











hotel appropriately named Paradise of Silence, set off the main road with stunning views of the desert. Our wonderful hosts plied us with mint tea and delicious home cooking. We spent hours exploring the UNESCO heritage Kasbah which was the setting for many movies and television shows including *Gladiator*, *The Mummy* and *Game of Thrones*. There were also more of the Instagram–brigade we had endured in Chefchaouen. Unfortunately, we couldn't unwind with a cold beer as alcohol is scarce away from the larger towns, but it gave us the chance to rest and make sure the bike was ready for the next part of the adventure.

A day later, we got up just before the sun and set off as the day was breaking. On the advice of a couple we met at the riad who own a motorcycle touring company, we took the smaller provincial road towards Marrakech, rather than returning to the national road at Ouarzazate. We were immediately thrown into a swift succession of hairpin bends snaking up through sleeping villages before following a stunning green valley that wound its way towards the High Atlas mountains. We rejoined the national highway just before the Tizi n'Tichka - the highest major mountain pass in North Africa. It was one of the easiest rides of our trip and we enjoyed it thoroughly. The road has been worked on extensively and is wide and mostly newly surfaced. There are still small stretches of gravel but, judging by the number of road-laying machines in the area, these won't be around for long. After a short stop to enjoy some panoramic views of the High Atlas, and with our ABS fault rearing its ugly head again, we gradually swapped the green and lush mountains and foothills for arid and flat landscapes and a rather less interesting ride into Marrakech. The long, straight roads were interrupted by numerous roundabouts and slow-moving trucks that refused to give way to anyone.

We were a little unprepared for the tiny but incredibly busy cobbled roads that led to our car park in Marrakech, but it wasn't long before the bike was safely parked and Dorian could release his death–grip on the handlebars. We enjoyed another day off the bike for my birthday and spent it drinking cold Casablanca beer in sweltering rooftop bars, eating traditional tagines and couscous, and exploring the maze of tiny lanes that make up the medina. The heat was aggressive, more than 10C above the seasonal average, but our peaceful riad was cool and provided a welcome break from the heat and constant sales–patter of the stall–holders in the surrounding souk.

After the heat and hassle of Marrakech, we were looking forward to the cooler temperatures of the coast the next day, and as we neared the small seaside town of Essaouira, the temperatures dropped to the mid-twenties and brought with it a welcome sense of calm. With our ABS problem now under control, the ride from Marrakech only took two-and-a-half hours along straight roads, but the scenery was still glorious. Dazzling white sand dunes and the occasional argan tree full of goats were surrounded by tourists with their huge buses parked nearby. We arrived in Essaouira to find our riad locked, but everyone on the tiny street got out their phones to contact the owner for us. It wasn't long before we were checked in, got out of our motorcycle gear and were having lunch in a charming organic and plastic-free café listening to Leonard Cohen, which matched the mood of the town perfectly.

Feeling refreshed after an evening in Essaouira's relaxed medina, we set off early the next morning for our longest day of riding at 288 miles. We wanted to get to Rabat without stopping in Casablanca as we had heard that the romantic-sounding city wasn't worth visiting, so we were prepared for a day on uninteresting toll roads to make good progress. The first part of the ride was completely unexpected, a perfectly-paved and tree-lined road with no other traffic, which wound its way over small hills connected by fast straights.



BAD ROADS BRING GOOD PEOPLE.



RIDING IN MOROCCO

Although the bike we have limits us to smooth surfaces, by choosing the smaller provincial roads, we got to see a lot of Morocco that isn't visible from the main highways. This was a two-week adventure, some days were long, but starting as the sun came up meant we always had time to explore our destination on arrival and a few strategically placed days off the bike really helped.

If you're not used to riding in high temperatures, it can be draining and you can succumb to dehydration without realising it. There were plenty of places to stop for water, food and petrol along the routes we chose. Most petrol stations have a small independent cafe offering freshly cooked food and clean toilets.

If you're not confident with mountain riding, you could do the route in the opposite direction which would give you more time to get used to riding in Morocco before hitting the mountain roads and passes. When planning a route in Google Maps, add at least another 25% to the time suggested, as many of these roads have much slower speed limits than expected and there are a lot of speed traps.



THE ROUTE

We rode 1,350 miles in total across Morocco.
From the port of Tangier Med, we headed south to
Chefchaouen in the Rif mountains, then further south to Fez and
on to Khénifra in the Middle Atlas mountains. From Todra gorge
in the High Atlas, we headed west to Ait Benhaddou, then over
the High Atlas again to Marrakech and on to Essaouira on the
Atlantic coast. We followed the coast north to Rabat and on to
Tangier before returning to Tangier Med.



After starting the day riding directly into the rising sun, we joined the toll road only to be buffeted continually by strong crosswinds, but we raised the windscreen on the bike and had plenty of stops to clear our heads and fill up on coffee and freshly-squeezed orange juice. The toll road was quiet until we approached the Casablanca turn-off, where there was a rush of mad traffic and the only bad driving we'd encountered on the trip so far. Cars were passing on the wrong side of us with centimetres to spare, then slamming on their brakes to avoid rear-ending the car in front. In contrast, all of the truck drivers at the toll gates let us push in front of them with huge smiles and friendly waves. We were happy to continue on to Rabat, where we found secure 24-hour parking just outside the city walls and walked five minutes to our riad in the medina. We were again welcomed with refreshing mint tea and a beautiful room for around £35 a night. I had booked all of our hotels online a few months previously, and it was great to be able to turn up in a new city without having to find accommodation on arrival.

Following the previous day's long ride, we enjoyed a much-needed lie-in and spent the rest of the day exploring Rabat's historic medina and the Kasbah of the Udayas with its beautiful blue-and-white buildings, reminiscent of Chefchaouen which by now felt like months ago instead of just two weeks earlier. Although Rabat is the capital city of Morocco, it has a much more relaxed feel than Fez or Marrakech, with extremely friendly people and wonderful street food. We spent quite a lot of time on a dhow that is now a lively bar with cold beer on tap and complimentary spiced olives. The temperature was a much more bearable 26C by day. Dorian and I agreed that this was our favourite city of the trip.

We left Rabat for Tangier amid the morning rush hour traffic. Thankfully, most of it was going in the opposite direction towards the new town and commercial district. The drivers were all aware of the motorbike though, letting us pass in front of them at the many roundabouts with a friendly wave or salute. There was a heavy mist as we left Rabat, making it feel as though we were riding through Northern Europe instead of Africa, a notion ruined only by the occasional palm tree and village mosque. As the fog lifted, we rode past busy farms with the whole family out in the fields, along with their hard-working donkeys and scores of egrets supervising nearby.

Rather than heading straight to our hotel when we arrived in Tangier, we took a detour to Cap Spartel, the point where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Mediterranean. Although the initial route suggested by our GPS was nondescript, we soon turned onto a breathtaking road that hugged the coastline. It provided stunning views of the wild Atlantic and secluded beaches, each with a small herd of camels at the entrance to entice passing tourists. The ride from Cap Spartel into Tangier was equally scenic, with gentle bends as we crossed the small hills that surround the city. We were a little disappointed that our trip through Morocco was ending when we reached our city-centre hotel, but we celebrated with cold beers on a patio overlooking the sun-bleached medina. We both agreed it was hands-down the best motorcycle trip we've done.

About a week into the trip, as we were leaving the Todra gorge, we pulled in at a viewpoint and started chatting to a friendly Australian man who was travelling in a minibus with his partner, young children and hired driver. He was really impressed that we had ridden all the way from Spain and had a faraway look in his eyes as we described our trip so far. As we left, he told us that's how he wanted to travel the world once his children had grown up. Hopefully, we passed on the motorcycle bug, just as the two anonymous German riders did with us all those years ago in Marrakech.







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In the 2000s, Tuan replaced his Minsks with Enfield Bullets, slow but unstoppable 350cc Indian road bikes. In 2019, he upped the ante again with a fleet of BMW adventure bikes – the first tour leader in Southeast Asia to do so. But, as BMW is not supporting touring in Vietnam, he had to do it without any of the help companies in other parts of the world depend on to maintain their fleets and build their customer base. Add Vietnam's brutal 80 percent import tax and it looks like mission impossible. But Tuan did it anyway.

Now, Tuan and I have history. Five years ago, I travelled to Vietnam and rode with him north from the capital Hanoi to Dong Van, a mountainous region bracing the Chinese border I dubbed Vietnam's 'Hidden Himalayas' in a report for the BBC. It was an incredible adventure and I'd always wanted to return, and recently I did.

But for this visit, Tuan plotted an alternative route heading west out of Hanoi to show me parts of the old Ho Chi Minh trail – a network of tracks the North Vietnamese used to smuggle manpower and supplies during the war. And instead of shitty old Bullets, we went armed to the teeth with the BMW F 800 GS.

"My father spent six years fighting in those mountains," says Tuan, pointing at a series of limestone karsts that rise out of the ground like giant chess pieces at a village near the Laotian border. "He lost his hearing for a while from getting caught up in so many bombing raids. Did you know America dropped more bombs on Vietnam than they dropped on both Germany and Japan during WWII?"

We get an inkling of an idea of the hardship Tuan's father endured during this service when we hit one of the old access lines to the Ho Chi Minh trail – a 2m–wide walking trail hacked through the jungle. It's a corruption of rock gardens and deep muddy ruts, and at times skirts deep ravines that leave no room for error. Tackling it is laborious in the 35C heat and I lose count of the number of times we get bogged, but it's nothing our Beemers can't dig out of with ease.

"During the war the only thing our soldiers had to help them carry things up these mountains were bicycles," Tuan notes. "They'd load them with up to 500kg of ammunition."

At midday, we stop at a flyblown town for a couple of bowls of pho, which is delicious Vietnamese beef noodle soup. The locals are amazed by the size of our bikes and by the nature of our journey. "They say nobody comes here because of the terrible roads," Tuan translates. "They don't understand how coming here is our idea of fun."

We get more curious looks and comments from locals where-ever we go, though one guy in particular makes Tuan a little nervous. "He asked many questions about you. Must be an undercover policeman," he says, explaining how the Ho Chi Minh Trail is now a major drug smuggling route from the Golden Triangle, a name coined by the CIA for the cross-border zone that's one of the largest opium-producing areas on Earth. "The police have placed cameras hidden in many places around here and they play the footage of drug smugglers on the news so the public can help identify them. But the terrain is so complex the police really can't stop them."

In the late afternoon, we merge onto a highway. It is a ribbon of steamrolled perfection that ebbs and flows around streams on an alluvial plain checkered with emerald-green rice paddies. After crawling through the jungle in low gear all day, it's a pleasure to let the throttle out and hear our Beemers purr, despite the large number of trucks on the road. "Ten years ago, this highway was a dusty road and only a few buses passed by every day," Tuan

says as we knock back a few beers and grilled pork with rice at a roadside stall later in the evening. "It's brought opportunities for the locals and that's good. But sometimes I think Vietnam is developing too fast."

The next day I was awoken at 5am by patriotic tunes blaring from public loudspeakers – a hangover from the war. We see a much nastier hangover later that morning at a café. A baby with a lopsided skull who's missing an ear. The deformity, Tuan explains, was likely caused by Agent Orange, a toxic defoliant the Americans used to burn the jungle in Vietnam and to deny guerrillas cover from dreaded B–52 bombers.

"Many healthy women in Vietnam today bare children with deformities because Agent Orange is embedded in our genes," he says.

Motorbikes have a way of making one forget bad things, though I still carry some of the heartache the baby's mother must feel as we career between hills that grow larger and take on crazier forms as we veer northwest. We pass cone-like mountains hundreds of metres tall and ridgelines resembling rows of dragon's teeth. And always in the background are blue-grey ranges, like folds in the hide of a giant who ate half the sky.

The days melt into each other as we follow zig-zagging mountain roads laden with hundreds of hairpin turns where the asphalt has been ripped to shreds by heavy rains and even heavier vehicles. Every time we approach one, we lay on the brakes, drop to second gear, stand up, bend the knees, find the cleanest entry line and muddle through before finding the cleanest exit line. When we stop for breaks, we collapse on the dirt while mumbling to ourselves about the sunburn, the cramps, our sore backs and swollen wrists. But overcoming these discomforts is part of the reward, along with shots of potent rice wine and gregarious feasts we are served every evening at quaint little homestays. In Vietnam, there's no such thing as a light meal. Spring rolls, crab soup, barbecued chicken, fish stew, roast duck, vegetables, rice, dipping sauces, spices, tropical fruit. More rice, more grilled meats, more greens. If there's any space left on the table, they just bring more.

One evening I'm stumbling around a homestay half-drunk in the dark looking for a bathroom when I find a little room full of candles surrounding a framed photo of a Vietnamese man in military fatigues. When I return to the table, our host tells me it is a shrine for his late father who was killed by an American sniper. But to paint the American GIs and Australian diggers who fought alongside them in this war as monsters is to twist the truth.

Most were only in their teens, either conscripted or conned by their governments to go to war against the 'Yellow Peril' and nearly 60,000 of them died face down in rice paddies. Some of those who survived have actually returned to Vietnam to make peace with their former enemies. "My uncle once met an Australian man travelling through Vietnam who was stationed in Da Nang during the war," says Tuan. "When they talked, they learned they were in a battle together, on opposite sides of course. They hugged and cried together because they realised they could have killed each other. They were so happy to know the other was still alive."

Motorbikes provide access to remote parts of the world most tourists will never see. They also teach you problem-solving skills because you can't call the auto club when the shit hits the fan in the bush. Like the day we take a wrong turn into a tea field and hit a dead end. The trail is too thin to pull off a U-turn so we basically have to flip the 300kg motorbikes with our hands. The only way to do so is by leveraging specific parts of our bikes. This

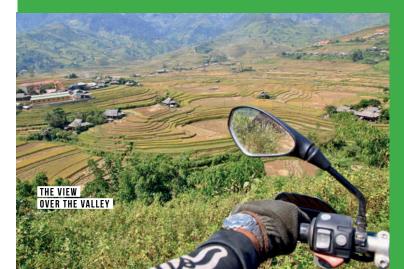


WANT TO RIDE IN VIETNAM

Etihad Airways will fly you from London Gatwick Airport to Hanoi for £900 return. British passport holders with pre-booked tours can obtain a 30-day visa on arrival for £20. Mototours Asia offers guided tours in North Vietnam for £290 per rider per day using BMW 650, 800 or 1200cc GS adventure bikes. Hanoi to Saigon one-way is £325 per day. Overland tours crossing into Laos, Cambodia and Thailand are £365 per day. See www.mototoursasia.com.















is one of the skills taught at a week–long instructional course at the BMW Motorrad school in Munich that tour leaders must attend to become official partners. But at £13,000 per head, it prices most Vietnamese out of the market. So, Tuan learned to do it the hard way – by trial and error.

Another time I forget to switch off my ignition when we stop for lunch and by the time we return, my battery is flat. We solve the problem by stripping back a set of electric cables, connecting Tuan's good battery to my flat battery and wait an hour or so for it to charge. And, when we fall over on the trails, we rush to each other's aid, using brain, not brawn, to pick up our heavy bikes. Independence, mateship, cooperation and self–resilience, these are the key takeaways from my adventure in Vietnam.

Coming off in the dirt or mud is one thing. Coming off on asphalt is another altogether. One day I'm riding behind Tuan through a tight bend when a minibus comes barrelling towards us on a collision course. Tuan just manages to avoid it but I don't. It clips my pannier and bowls me over. Fortunately, both the motorbike and I emerge unscathed.

But an argument erupts between the bus driver and Tuan over who is at fault. Things heat up and the bus driver makes a near-fatal mistake when he pokes my guide in the chest. Tuan is tiny, only 5ft high, but he happens to be a fifth-dan red-belt Kung-Fu master. He was taught to fight by his father, who was taught by his father who once confronted a group of 12 armed men who broke into his home.

Six of the intruders were killed in the melee, the other six laid swords down and begged for forgiveness. But today Tuan decides turns the other cheek. "It would bring me shame to fight with an ordinary man like him," he says.

On the second last day of our tour, we pull over to see the sunset over a wide curve in the Da River. Directly in front of us is a pyramid-shaped karst with spectacular vertical walls and rocky overhangs.

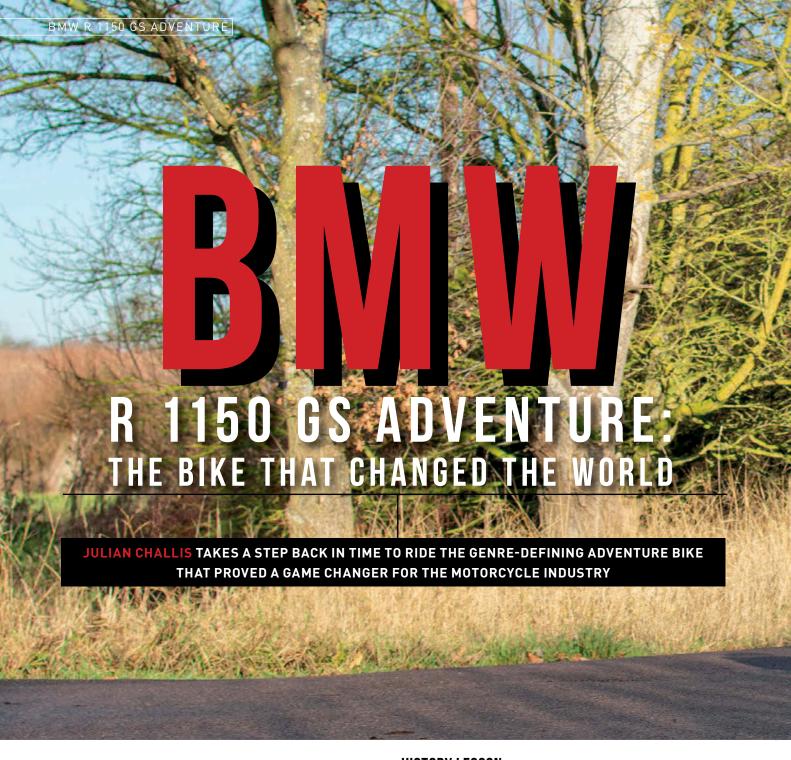
To the right and left are staccatos of rice terraces set on impossibly steep hills, marvels of engineering probably dug with shovels and picks. And floating on the water, a mirror of silver and gold, are a few little boats where fisherman cast their nets. It is the most beautiful sight I have seen in my life.

"My dream is to build a luxury eco-resort on this very spot with a swimming pool between the rice fields," Tuan tells me, though his plans for his touring business are more proletarian. "I don't care about becoming an official partner of BMW," he says. "All I care about is bringing adventure riders to Vietnam. Make life a ride. Isn't that BMW's motto?"

THE BIKE: BMW F 800 GS

Until recently, the only way to ride around Vietnam, and just about any other part of Southeast Asia, was on a scooter, a Honda XR 250 from the 1990s, or a Royal Enfield 350cc Bullet. Ergo, upgrading to a BMW F 800 GS, even the 2013 models we took on this trip, was akin to time travel.

Tuan bought these used 2013 models for practical reasons - they are a third of the price of a 2019 model straight out of the showroom in Vietnam. They may lack the creature comforts the later models come with, but when you're out on the trails eating dust or tearing down a long, lonely highway, they really are not that different to later model bikes. If you decide to go down this road and buy an early model Beemer, you should however ensure it has low mileage and invest in a set of BMW tools in the event yours break down in the middle of nowhere.



n 2020, the BMW GS celebrates its 40th anniversary. For any motorcycle, that's a pretty impressive achievement. But in 1980, the designers of the humble R80 Gelande Strasse, an unremarkable addition to the company's existing range, could hardly have predicted that the model would still be in production

20 years into the next decade, let alone that it would become a genre-defining icon within motorcycling history. But if there is one model within that forty year back catalogue that can be identified as the one that took the GS from a niche model to a global success, it's the R 1150 GS Adventure.

For this issue of *Adventure Bike Rider*, we're putting aside all the new metal from EICMA, parking the latest and greatest that will be appearing in your showrooms for 2020, and instead going back to the bike that put adventure motorcycling into the mainstream. The bike that, thanks to a television programme, altered the path of the entire motorcycling industry. The bike that changed the world.

HISTORY LESSON

Back in 2002, the world was a very different place. In the UK, New Labour was still riding a wave of popularity that had seen them propelled into power some five years earlier. As if echoing their campaign song from back in 1997, things, it seemed, could only get better, and the coming celebrations of the Queen's Golden Jubilee served to add a touch of patriotic fervour into the mix. Technology was improving life too, and if you were one of the lucky ones, you probably had just upgraded your Nokia 3310 to the far sleeker and more futuristic 3610. This amazing bit of kit could now allow you to not only call people, but also send texts, purchase, or even compose, your own ringtones and, if that were not enough, play Snake 2, the new although arguably identical upgrade to Snake. And in pop music, Christina Aguilera gave the world her video for 'Dirrty', a gift for schoolboys and grown men to enjoy.

But in terms of motorcycles, adventure bikes were largely unimportant to the dealers. The bikes that were flying out of the showrooms all across the UK, and indeed the world, were the sports bikes. From the exquisite R1 that had gone fuel



injected for 2002, to the Honda Fireblade that had crept up to 954cc to keep pace with the Yamaha, the buyers wanted road going versions of Grand Prix bikes, and the Japanese manufacturers were all too happy to oblige. According to MCIA statistics for the year, over 30,000 sports bikes were sold, with a further 15,500 buyers opting for sports tourers. Adventure bikes such as there were (the Africa Twin, Ténéré, BMW and a few others) accounted for just 5,000 units, a figure far lower than the 8,000 that had bought trail bikes or the 8,500 that had opted for cruisers.

So, against the backdrop of these figures and the enthusiasm of the motorcycling public at the time, BMW's decision to bring out a far more off-road and adventure-focussed version of their existing R 1150 GS seemed, at best, questionable. Adventure travel was largely the reserve of wisened and weather-beaten enthusiasts, their panniers adorned with stickers from far flung locations, their riding kit caked in layers of mud and dust from transglobal expeditions, and the occupants smelling somewhere between a wet flannel and a long-dead badger. With

satellite navigation and internet technology still in its relative infancy, adventure travel required months of pouring over maps, waiting for visas and then breaking down in hostile environments. Compared to hooning round on a race replica, the experience came way down on the list for mainstream buyers. And, who in their right mind was going to choose a tall, heavy and slow lump like the BMW?

Although it wasn't the original 2002 model that propelled Ewan McGregor, Charley Boorman and the GSA to global notoriety (the went in 2004), it was the R 1150 GSA that successfully took the two actors the 20,000 miles around the world, coping with everything from flat-out tarmac to endless and punishing dirt roads across remote landscapes. It was the 1150 that made the trip possible and, thanks to the resultant Sky and then BBC series, bought adventure motorcycling to the world. And ultimately, it was the influence of the 1150 that that has persuaded buyers across the world to stop buying those GP-inspired missiles and start buying adventure bikes. If there was any bike that we needed to revisit, it was this.



TEST CASE

Locating our test bike for our BMW retrospective was surprisingly simple. A brief scour through the eBay listings revealed that there are still plenty of 1150s out there, even if the Adventure versions are a tad less common thanks to the lower production numbers and indeed sales of the GSA compared to the standard GS. Prices are quite variable too with lower spec 1150s starting out at around £2,500 and topping out at an incredible £8,495 for a pristine 2005 GSA with just 11,300 miles on the clock. But, wanting to taste the original 2002 vintage of this particular motorcycling claret, we located a suitable option on sale for a far more pocket-friendly £3,695 at Topbikes of Coventry. A swift call to company owner Simon Burgess revealed the bike to be an ideal candidate for our test, with just over 38,000 miles covered, great original condition with a smattering of sensible aftermarket additions, luggage and upgrades. And, as if it couldn't get any better, the bike was located a mere 21 miles from the ABR offices on the outskirts of the city, and Simon was only too pleased to help us out with a test ride.

With my long-term 690 Enduro R returned to KTM and the workhorse Yamaha TDM 850 in dry dock with an electrical issue, I made the cold trip up to collect the bike on my Fireblade. While the performance and handling are undoubtedly somewhat different to anything I've tested recently for *ABR*, the lack of comforts and, more importantly, heated grips on the CBR did leave me yearning for the cossetting features of a modern adventure bike. However, on the plus side, it also gave me a particularly accurate indication of exactly what type of bike the 1150 was competing against when it was released, and in retrospect, how far the market has moved in the 17 years since this bike rolled off the Bavarian production line. Adventure bikes now account for more than 17% of total bike sales in the UK compared to just 4% in 2002, whereas sales of sports bikes like the Fireblade are on a continuous downward spiral.

FIRST LOOK

The first thing that strikes you about the 1150 is the sheer scale of the bike. While we've all got used to the imposing and ever-increasing dimensions of adventure bikes, the stripped back and almost minimal design of the first GSA serves to bring it into stark focus. The optional larger fuel tank holds an impressive 30l compared to the stock 22, the enormous dimensions giving almost Rubenesque curves of the vast flanks. Jeez it looks cool!

The bars are typically GS, with a lazy sweep and wide dimensions, the levers protected with generous handguards that thankfully show little evidence of unintentional get-offs in the bike's former life, which, given the bike's 880mm seat height, suggest a history of either very tall or very careful owners. Moving around to the front of the bike, the characteristic beak looks so big as to be almost comical, a massive flat platform jutting out of the front of the bike some eighteen inches ahead of the bars. In 2002, this feature must have appeared revolutionary – even if Suzuki had used similar on the DR 800 five years before – but it's a design that almost all of the pretenders to BMW's current throne have since adopted.

Our test bike is in great condition and shows little of the 38,000 miles showing on the analogue dials. There's an almost unhealthy suspicion among current buyers about bikes with even modest mileage of a few thousand miles, but with machines like the 1150, the motor is barely run in. And at seventeen years old, the GSA is still within the realms of light use, with just over 2,000 miles a year since its first registration.

Taking the 1150 off the stand and sitting on it for the first time, it's evident that the GSA's somewhat minimal design didn't really manage to keep the weight at bay, the stock bike tipping the scales at 227 kg dry, pretty much the same as the current 1250. But like it's modern counterpart, the bike wears its weight well, and once sat on the bike it's not anything like as intimidating as it might







WANT THIS ONE?

The 2002 R 1150 GS Adventure we tested is on sale for £3,695 at Topbikes of Coventry. For that you get a 38,000 mile bike with a recent clutch, new discs and pads, adjustable footpegs, bar risers, aluminium sumpguard, header pipe protectors, MRA screen with original as spare, wind deflectors, upgraded Cam chain tensioners, Decat Y pipe with standard as spare, BMW panniers and topbox with rack and attachment points, crash bars, Bagster tank cover and tank bag, two spare seats and deer whistles! It's had five owners, the last of which was the seller's brother who rode it all over Europe with a grin on his face. Call Simon on 07817 842741 for details.

at first appear. I run through a quick check of the controls to see where everything is - worthwhile as this was the era that BMW put indicators on either bar - and a quick push of the starter sees the eight-valve 1130cc oil-cooled boxer motor spring into life with the characteristic and comforting lurch. The engine sounds as sweet as it might have back in 2002, helped a certain amount by the aftermarket catalytic converter-free Y connector that allows the twin

cylinders to burble away freely through the big end can.

ROAD RUNNER

Pulling away onto the suburban roads of Coventry, what is immediately noticeable on the 1150 is just how incredibly light the steering is on this bike. With such a large tank and a wide front end, you might expect a certain heaviness and reluctance to turn, but the telelever front suspension makes the bike feel as light and manoeuvrable as a 125. Cutting through the midday traffic is unexpectedly simple, and even though the bike has some quite substantial engine bars in place, filtering through the lines of cars is a swift and easy process. The bike may be the off-road variant of the GS, but the GSA still runs the 19/17 wheel combination which undoubtedly contributes to the bike's good road manners.

After a few moments in the congestion, I pick up the A45 which then leads into the A46 heading south and it's a chance to open the taps a bit. Compared to the 2019 incarnation, the 1150 is considerably down on power at a mere 85 bhp, but you have to remember that, when this bike was bought out, the target market was a select group of riders that wanted an ultra-reliable bike that could genuinely ride round the world loaded to the gunwales with luggage. The modern GSA still needs to be able to do this, but it's more likely to be storming along autobahns and ripping through the twisties at the weekend than crossing continents, which was the sole intention of the 1150. And, once you reset your mind to this reality,

the bike is just a hoot to ride. With most of the power and torque in the mid-range, it pays to short shift through the six-speed box and just enjoy the intoxicating surge from that big boxer motor below you. The Warwickshire countryside rushes past in a wonderful blur of russet tones, and I'm already falling in love with this lump of Teutonic technology.

The road begins to tighten up a bit, but it's no hassle for the 1150. The relationship between the wide-set bars, the wellplaced footpegs and super-comfortable one-piece saddle allows you to sweep the bike through the curves with the minimum of effort, the low centre of gravity and well-set-up suspension allowing the bike to drop in and out of the corners with an unexpected agility. And if you do need to haul it all up, the ABS-assisted twin 304mm discs at the front and single 276 mm single disc at the rear will scrub speed with equally unexpected efficiency for such a physically large machine.

Because this is effectively the specced up version of the standard bike, it comes with a smattering of upgrades, none of which were more appreciated than the heated grips taking the edge off the cold November air. Winter riding has its drawbacks, but many of them can be overlooked if you have warm hands. Although removed for our test, the BMW panniers that were available as options back in 2002 were still with the bike, and teamed up with the top box, would allow an impressive luggage capacity to satisfy the most serial over-packer like myself. This is a bike made for travel.

Continuing south through the autumnal landscape away from Stratford, the road opens up again, and it's time to check the old-fashioned round mirrors and stretch the bike's legs once more. Although the standard screen was quite substantial, our test bike has an adjustable MRA aftermarket version fitted, and the wind protection is good, with little buffeting. The cockpit is well organised and, for something designed nearly 20 years ago, the clocks are surprisingly contemporary, with a clear, speedo, fuel gauge and temperature gauge. When modern machines are bombarding the rider with ever more information each year, it's a refreshing change to have things reduced to the real essentials.

And it's the same with the frame and bodywork. The 1150 GSA runs a three-section tubular steel frame, but with the big motor acting as a structural component, there is little of it on show save for the subframe below the saddle on both sides of the bike. The frame finish puts modern bikes to shame, as does the gloriously deep silver paint and GS logo on the cavernous tank. This is a quality machine.

ROUGH TRADE

Having got the measure of the bike on the blacktop, it's time to take the GSA from the strasse and onto the gelande – that's from the road to the off-road for the less multilingual. With the standard dual sport tyres long since ditched in favour of road going options, I couldn't exactly head for snotty and mud-filled lanes, but I could pick up some lovely little gravel tracks and trails to the north of Evesham. And yet again the GSA shows its impeccable heritage, taking on the transition without a murmur.

As with the road, the telelever front suspension and sensible steering geometry make the bike incredibly simple and precise to control off road, and for a big bike, the GSA has a really small turning circle making surprisingly tight and slow turns possible. The front shock gives the bike a full 210mm of travel, whereas the single rear shock gives a tad more at 220mm and has a remote adjuster for the preload. Teamed up with the faultless shaft drive and the Paralever single-sided swingarm and impeccable balance, the GSA can be ridden at almost trials speeds with little effort, and if you want to turn up the wick, will destroy the trails with a spray of stones firing from the rear wheel. Gear changes are precise, and the hydraulic clutch as good as anything on a modern BMW or indeed any other brand. It might be a heavy option to take off road, but if you are man or indeed woman enough, the GSA will match you every mile of the way.

Calling in at the ABR offices for photos after my brief off-road foray, there's a universal approval of the bike from the whole team. We still have a 2019 R 1250 GS Exclusive as a long termer and, parked alongside the cool black contours of the new bike, the 2002 version looks both very different and very similar at the same time. It's a mark of how good BMW's original design for the first GSA was that some 17 years down the line, the spirit of the GS is still running through the new bikes like a seam of gold through rock. Yet the 2002 bike is still so much more special. Without the 1150 and what it achieved for BMW, the 2019 bike may never have existed.

GAME OVER

With the winter sun slipping below the distant Malvern hills, it's time to take the BMW back home. And I'm genuinely sorry to be returning it. For a bike that is nearly two decades old, it is every bit as enjoyable as the all-new R 1250 GSA that I tested in Almeria this time last year. Yes, the motor is not as powerful, yes, the technology is almost non-existent, and yes it looks dated, but all of that simply does not matter. In fact, I'd argue that all of those shouldn't be seen as disadvantages, but positive advantages that make the bike all the more attractive. I like the fact it's just a cracking engine in a good frame with no frills. I like the fact that it's a massive lump of German engineering, its workings proudly exposed like some motorcycling version of the Pompidou Centre. And most of all, I like the fact that it's still so good to ride.

Would I have this bike in my garage? In a heartbeat. ABR



AS A WEEKEND TOURER

assassin. Just a very big assassin.

We're moving slowly towards the BMW's sweet spot here, as the 1150 GSA would make a fantastic bike for blasting round the twisties at the weekend, one or even two up. Choose the right rubber and the BMW will keep up you smiling all day long, and when you stop at a biker café, everyone will love it. On the sound track, while we're tempted by a bit of Rammstein, we're going for a bit of Cool Cymru with the Manic Street Preachers. A design for life – that's the GS.

AS AN OFF-ROADER

The 1150 GSA was designed for getting down and dirty and it would it be almost a crime to keep it clean. To get the best of this bike on the dirt then you are going to need to invest in some big block hoops and maybe stay away from Salisbury Plain in the winter. Find yourself some flowing gravel roads and get your drift on. This bike is a beast.

AS A CONTINENTAL ROAD TOURER

Now we're talking. Taking an 1150 on a big trip would be one of the best ways you could spend your time, and with that big lazy engine, smooth power and super-comfortable seat, the bike will take you as far as you want to go. Load up the luggage and head for Dover.

AS AN RTW OVERLANDER

Umm - so does anyone actually need confirmation that this bike can go around the world? The R 1150 GSA is without question the most famous bike to ever circumnavigate our planet, even if its progress through the tougher parts of the Road of Bones was at best, somewhat laboured. But Hell – take it round the world and we'll run your story whatever happens.

AS A PILLION CARRIER

Again the 1150 will knock this one out of the park, and the generous dimensions of the GSA are ideal for taking your nearest and dearest out on the road. OK, so it might not be as enjoyable once away from the tarmac, but if you take a passenger off-road they know they'll be in for a bumpy ride whatever bike you're on.

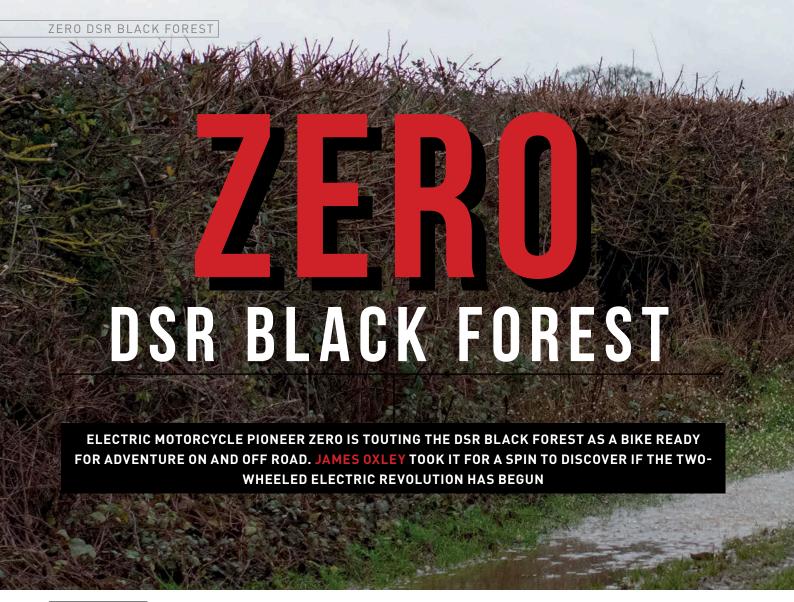
ALPINESTARS











S

witching on the Zero DSR Black Forest for the first time was a bizarre experience. I turned the ignition key, pushed the kill switch into the on position and waited... Nothing happened. I waited a few more seconds, stared at the controls to see if I'd missed the blindingly obvious, but still nothing seemed to

be going on. It was at that moment I spotted a little green light on the dash and remembered the nice chap from the Zero dealership explaining that it meant the battery-powered 'engine' was ready. I gingerly twisted the throttle. Again, nothing happened. I moved my wrist a little further and began to inch forward. There was a deafening silence.

This was my first time controling an electric vehicle of any kind and I admit to being rather underwhelmed by the start up process. I'm not sure what I expected. I thought there would be something to replace the satisfying sound of an engine barking into life. Maybe a series of sounds and a fancy animation dancing across the dash. Perhaps even a thumb print or facial recognition system. Something to leave me in no doubt I was riding a bike fitted with the propulsion system of the future. Instead there was a sense of, well... emptiness. The experience didn't stir any emotion in me at all, apart from a curiosity about whether the bike was turned on.

Despite this, I remained eager to put the bike through its paces and find out what riding an electric motorcycle was all about. I admit to having my interest in the electric vehicle (EV) scene piqued last year when spy shots revealed Ewan and Charley riding Harley–Davidson's LiveWire through the Americas in the third instalment of the *Long Way* series, the *Long Way Up*. So, with the

famous theme tune playing on repeat in my head, I set out on a 90-mile journey from Peterborough to *ABR* HQ in Stratford-Up-on-Avon. As I pulled out of the car park, my left hand reached in vain for a gear lever that wasn't there – like all electric vehicles, the Zero DSR Black Forest only has one gear, so it's twist and go. And, boy, does it go. I filtered onto the main road and felt a thump of instant acceleration as the 14.4 kWh battery laid down a big ol'slab of torque through the rear wheel. Now this is more like it, I thought. Perhaps I can get onboard with this EV revolution after all.

At this point, you may be wondering why *ABR* is reviewing an electric motorcycle. Here's why. While it may be the case that a lot of us demand long-distance touring capability from a bike and current battery technology and charging infrastrucutre simply isn't up to the job of dashing across Europe, the truth is many of us use our machines for less testing purposes. Think commuting and weekend blasts. Have electric motorcycles developed enough to cater to those needs? Zero certainly thinks so. It is marketing the DSR Black Forest as the 'most adventure-ready electric motorcycle on the planet'.

Our test bike came fitted with a full set of Givi aluminium luggage, a touring screen, spotlights, a headlight protector, metal footpegs, crash bars, metal handguards and a bash plate. It also has an adventure-style beak thrown in for good measure. This all suggests Zero has given some thought to the needs of the adventure rider. But what's this electric machine actually like to ride?

COMFORT

I soon found myself filtering through downtown Peterborough's traffic. It's not the most glamorous of introductions to a new bike, but it did give me a chance to focus on the basics for a while. The



ergonomics of the Black Forest remind me of Honda's mid-sized adventure bike, the CB500X, which I rode for a few months in 2019. They are both smaller than a 'full-size' adventure motorcycle. As a 6ft-tall man, the hands, backside, feet triangle is a little more cramped than I'd like, and the bars are slightly further forward than I'm used to. The knee bend is also quite tight. However, the Zero's smaller stature and its approachable 843mm seat height did mean I could plant both feet firmly on the ground with ease. With this in mind, I can see the Black Forest appealing to those who are put off by bigger machines. The seat is wide and comfortable enough to spend a couple of hours onboard (you'll likely need to get off and charge the battery if you ride for any longer).

POWER

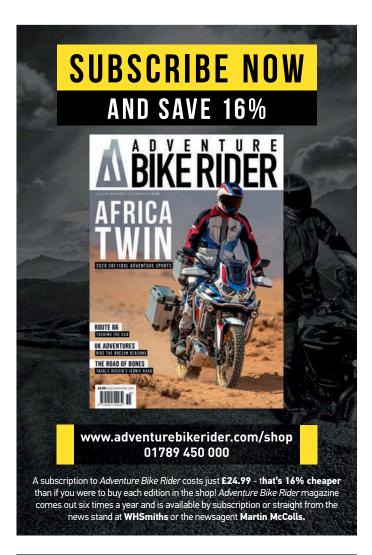
Soon enough, I left Peterborough behind and found myself on open roads with 69 bhp available at a twist of the wrist. I'll admit it was a lot of fun wrenching back the throttle and feeling the bike's seemingly endless acceleration without the need to change gear. It simply keeps getting faster and I found myself having to regularly throttle off for reasons of safety and legality. It's a pretty crazy experience and one that left me laughing out loud in my helmet. And I could hear myself laughing too, because the only sound that came from the bike was a muted whir and the noise of rubber on road. To be honest, the near silence was rather underwhelming and nowhere near the visceral sound and feel of an internal combustion engine roaring and vibrating with delight. Don't get me wrong, accelerating on the DSR Black Forest is fun, fast and taps into my inner child with its magic carpet-like experience, but it does lack a soundtrack to really get my heart racing.

I was making my way to the village of Uppingham, about 25 miles down the road, where I had arranged to meet a chap from Zero (Paul) who was going take me through the electric charging process. I had more than enough juice to get me there, but I couldn't help but feel a nagging pang of range anxiety, so I switched from 'Sport' mode to 'Eco' and the DSR Black Forest immediately felt very different. As you might expect, 'Eco' mode reduces the amount of power available to the rider. The throttle response is a lot softer and acceleration is slower which, for a bike without traction control, would likely be the mode I would choose in the wet. The riding experience isn't as fun and the bike's speed tops out at 70mph (it can get to 100 mph in 'Sport' mode'). On the plus side, my battery power gauge on the LCD screen didn't decline anywhere near as much and I found myself happy to forgo some power in order to guarantee I reached my destination.

CHARGING

It turns out I need not have worried. I arrived in Uppingham with 74% of my battery power left. I initially stopped in the wrong carpark, pulling up to a friendly biker who fired a series of questions at me about my electric motorcycle which I couldn't answer, but the encounter goes to show the Zero is a good conversation starter. After finding the correct carpark, Paul took me through the charging process. It turned out to be rather simple and easy. He showed me an app on his phone which revealed the location of charging points across the UK and whether they were suitable for my vehicle. The app, called Zap-Map, also told me if they were in use and whether there were any technical issues that would stop me using them.

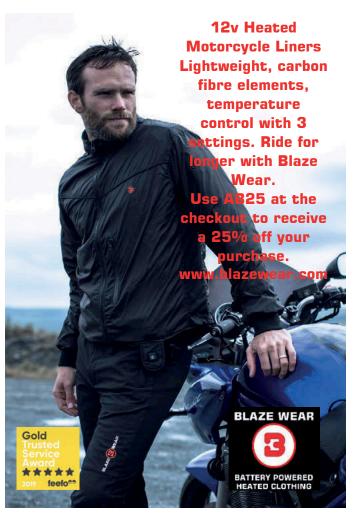
The Zero is suitable for use with fast chargers, one of which I found







hello@moto-mate.com











myself parked next to. Inside the bike's top box is a charging cable which connects the motorcycle to the charging point. A few presses of the app and the bike started charging. He said this type of charger provides one per cent of charge per minute, so we grabbed a coffee and about 25 minutes later the Zero was up to 100% again. The whole process cost less than 50p, plus the cost of the coffees.

Doing the math, a full charge would take more than an hour and half, pretty much the length of a football match including half time. So, unless you're going to watch the football, this is obviously not as convenient as filling up at a petrol station. Since I undertook that first charge, I've been replenishing the DSR Black Forest's battery overnight simply by plugging it into a standard three-pin socket in the wall. It takes about nine hours to fully charge using this method. This approach is ideal for commuting to work or Sunday rides, a task for which the DSR has proved economical and convenient. If I was to undertake longer journeys, I'd need to plan my route carefully and allow enough time for charging, a process that would rule out the Black Forest as a long-distance tourer for me.

HANDLING

As I zipped through traffic on my journey from Peterborough to the office, I found the throttle response on the Zero to be smooth and progressive with no hint of snatching or jerking. The handling was nippy enough to dive between lines of traffic and I found myself flicking the bike along country lanes with gusto. It also felt perfectly stable cruising along at motorway speeds, although I did suffer a fair amount of wind buffeting on my shoulders and head despite the presence of a big screen. When it comes to stopping power, the Bosch single disc front and rear brakes provided plenty of bite though they're not the most powerful brakes I've used.

I also took the DSR Black Forest along some gravel roads and it performed competently. The standing position is a little cramped

for a man of my height, and I imagine the 178 mm front and 179 mm rear suspension travel would bottom out pretty easily if pushed too hard, but the bike was happy handling some light off-roading. At 222kg it's also on the heavier end of the scale.

BUILD QUALITY AND STYLE

The DSR Black Forest I've been riding has done more than 7,000 miles as part of Zero's press fleet. It's a tough life for a motorcycle, with journalists always keen to push a bike to its limits without much care for its longevity. With this in mind, the bike I was riding was in damn good shape. In terms of build quality, it feels solidly put together and there's nothing to complain about. However, there isn't much to rave about either, particularly when it comes to style. The DSR Black Forest is a conventional looking bike. Apart from the fact there is a large black box where an engine would usually sit, nothing screams out that this is an electric motorcycle.

Whether this is a good or a bad thing will depend on your point of view. It stops the bike looking like a novelty, but the conventional styling also stops the Zero feeling special. Nowhere is this more evident than when I was sat on the bike. For a motorcycle with a retail price of £18,090, it doesn't feel at all premium. That's not to say it feels cheap either, it simply feels more like sitting onboard that Honda CB500X I mentioned earlier, which will set you back just £6,069. The LCD dash is functional but looks outdated in today's world of TFT displays, the switch gear is basic, and there are no goodies like heated grips, cornering lights, or cruise control that you would expect in a machine with a premium price tag.

VALUE FOR MONEY

You can save £1,500 on the price of a DSR Black Forest thanks to the Government's plug-in motorcycle grant. But, even with this saving, whether the bike offers value for money or not will come •





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down to your point of view. If it is treated as any other motorcycle then the answer is no. I could buy a premium bike like the Ducati Multistrada 1260 or a BMW R1250 GSA for around the same price point and be the envy of all my mates. However, if you look at the Zero DSR Black Forest from a running costs perspective, then a value for money argument could be made. After all, maintenance on an electric motorcycle is minimal, made even more so by the presence of a belt drive on the DSR Black Forest so you don't even need to maintain and replace a chain. Combine this with the fact the bike only costs a couple of quid to fully charge and you'll be saving a few hundred to a few thousand pounds on running costs.

The problem with this approach is that value for money is about so much more than, well... money. For me, a motorcycle represents good value if it makes me feel a million dollars. If my heart leaps for joy and I feel like the coolest guy on Earth every time I ride it, then that's money well spent. And, this is the main issue I have with the DSR Black Forest. It's certainly capable, but didn't make me feel special.

CONCLUSION

Overall, I enjoyed riding the DSR Black Forest and I'm sure Zero will continue to push the boundaries of what an electric motor-cycle can do. To achieve this, it'll need early adopters to buy its current motorcycles so it can continue to invest in the future. I genuinely hope this happens.

But who'll become an early adopter? This is the million dollar question, and one, in all honesty, I'm struggling to answer. So rather than look at what the Zero isn't (a touring bike, for example), it's better to think about what it does well. If you're looking to join the 'electric revolution' in its infancy, take advantage of the frugal running costs, and your usual riding doesn't involve much distance, then it'll prove a capable and fun purchase. But it's ever so hard to ignore the £18,090 elephant in the room.

AS AN OFF-ROADER

Finding somewhere to charge in more remote locations will be an issue. However, the bike will handle light off-road work and more challenging terrain at lower speeds, but there are plenty of more suitable bikes I would buy ahead of the Zero for dirt riding.

AS A CONTINENTAL ROAD TOURER

Electric bikes don't yet have the range or charging speed to be viable continental road tourers, unless you have plenty of time on your hands. That being said, if you've got your heart set on an electric bike, the Zero is capable of covering long distances in relative comfort, albeit with plenty of stops to top up the battery.

AS AN RTW OVERLANDER

Theoretically yes, the Zero will take you around the world because all you need is a plug socket to charge it. But, in reality, electric bike technology and charging infrastructure isn't good enough yet to make it a viable option without a support team.

AS A PILLION CARRIER

The pillion seat on the Zero is on the small side and it isn't somewhere I'd want to spend extended periods of time on, but it should be comfortable enough for short rides.



s a young newspaper reporter starting my career in a seaside town that had seen better days, I once had the privilege of

interviewing the British actress and Holly-wood icon Joan Collins. The star of Land of the Pharaohs, The Stud, and perhaps most famously the American television drama Dynasty, was appearing in a play at the Cliffs Pavilion theatre in Southend-on-Sea. Celebrities don't visit Southend that often, so it was the perfect opportunity for a cub reporter eager to make his way in the newspaper industry to get a celebrity scoop. Maybe even a story that would be good enough to appear in a national newspaper.

I sat through the play, studiously making illegible notes in the darkness of the theatre for my review, before I was ushered into a VIP area for an audience with Joan. It was at that moment my plan to disarm her with my charm and obtain a juicy quote was torpedoed by something I hadn't experienced in person until that moment – star quality.

Joan was mesmerising. If I hadn't known better, I would have sworn one of the spotlights from the stage was still focused on her. She commanded the attention of the entire room and, when she spoke to me, I couldn't help but feel a swelling sense of pride that I was the focus of her attention. She was sprinkling a little Hollywood glamour in my direction and I felt a million dollars because of it.

It's safe to say I didn't get my scoop, but I didn't care. I'd met a bona fide superstar while learning a valuable lesson about human nature that would serve me well in the future. And anyway, I don't think my slippery tabloid journalist persona was helped by the fact I took my mum along to the interview (she's a big fan and you should always do nice things for your mum).

So, what's a meeting with Joan Collins got to do with the Ducati Multistrada 1260 Enduro I hear you ask? Well, it's all to do with star quality. It's not something that can be acquired, it's something you either have or you don't and, like Joan, the big Italian adventure bike has it in spades.

This was apparent when the 1260 Enduro arrived at the *ABR* offices for the first time earlier this year. Usually when a new long-term bike arrives in the car park, the motorcycle riding members of the team will check it out and indulge in a few minutes of bike chatter, before returning to their desks. However, the big Ducati's entrance was a grander affair altogether. At the sound of that throaty engine roaring into life, we leapt up from our desks and dashed

outside to get our first look at the latest version of Ducati's big off roader. We stood there basking in its glory, marvelling at the flowing lines of the meticulous Italian design and craftsmanship. We all took turns sitting on the bike and revving the engine with huge grins, before taking it for spins around the car park. Even one or two of the ABR team without a bike licence emerged to cast admiring glances at a machine that had all the glitz and glamour of Joan Collins at the Cliffs Pavilion.

One thing became clear. The Ducati Multistrada 1260 Enduro has star quality unlike any other adventure bike I can think of. However, the real treat is reserved for when you ride this A-lister of a motorbike. Just as I felt a million dollars when Joan gave me her undivided attention in a room full of people, being the guy at the controls of the 1260 Enduro makes you feel very special indeed. People can't help but look up as you cruise through town, other bikers give admiring nods, and I'm certain I've become more attractive to the opposite sex thanks to a little of the Ducati's star quality rubbing off on me.

In fact, the bike has proven so popular in the office that three of the team all made sure we got to spend plenty of quality time on it. But as our time with the 1260 Enduro nears an end, did its performance live up to its star billing or was



it an expensive flop? This is the definitive *ABR* verdict on a year spent riding Ducati's premium adventure bike.

AS A COMMUTER

It seems a shame to kick off a review of a bike as brilliant as the Ducati Multistrada 1260 Enduro with its biggest flaw, but there's no getting away from the fact that this is a huge motorcycle. It weighs in at 254 kg, which isn't helped by the fact it has a whopping 30l fuel tank. In fact, the bike is so heavy, I had to get some help pushing it forward off its centre stand the other day after I'd parked it on a slope facing uphill. That big fuel tank also makes the bike wide up top too. With this in mind, if your idea of commuting is scything through snarling city traffic at rush hour, you'll find yourself regularly second guessing whether you can squeeze through that gap between a bus and white van.

However, if you're comfortable slipping between lines of angry commuters on a big bike, the Ducati's height and upright riding position provides a commanding view of the chaos unfolding in front of you. That 158 bhp engine ensures you'll win the race away from traffic lights every time, and there is more than enough suspension travel to soak up the plentiful supply of potholes on UK roads. Putting the bike into 'Urban' mode softens the acceleration and

makes controlling a fiercely powerful bike more manageable at slow filtering speeds.

My main issue with confining the 1260 Enduro to commuting duties is the fact it feels a bit like capturing a mustang from the wild and forcing it into a life of servitude plodding up and down Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Quite frankly, it feels like a crime against motorcycling each time I ride the two miles from my flat in Stratford-up-on-Avon to the ABR offices, barely getting out of third gear. And speaking of crime, I have heart palpitations each time I leave a £20,000 motorcycle parked up in a city motorcycle bay in plain sight of prospective thieves.

But what if your commute isn't in a city or town? Mine, for example, also involves spending many hours each weekend on motorways and A-roads riding to and from the South West of England. At this task, the big Ducati is formidable. It cruises effortlessly way beyond legal speed limits, it's supremely comfortable, and the primal roar emitted by the exhaust sees lines of traffic part in front of me like Moses parting the Red Sea. I'll also admit to feeling as cool as Steve McQueen each time I park up the handsome Ducati, and that's a good feeling to to start the day with.

AS A WEEKEND TOURER

A massive enduro bike may not seem the

obvious choice for cruising along country lanes on a weekend break, but the 1260 Enduro's impeccable road manners have made it an absolute pleasure to ride in these circumstances. That's not to say the Ducati is in anyway tame, hell no. Open up that 1,262cc engine and the wildest of beasts is unleashed. I've never ridden on the back of a fire-breathing dragon in a bad mood but I bet the experience isn't far off clinging to a wide-open throttle on the 1260 Enduro. Feeling the bike's supersonic surge of acceleration is just as thrilling and terrifying now as it was the first time I rode the bike. Some might say you don't need 158 bhp on a motorcycle, and they'd probably be right, but boy, it's a lot of fun if you do.

However, by far my favourite aspect of the liquid-cooled Testastretta engine is the fact it has an abundance of power available absolutely everywhere. Twist the throttle at motorway speeds and you'll get a primal surge of acceleration that has genuinely left me whooping with joy into my helmet. The bike is also brilliant fun to ride while scratching around twisting A-roads on a weekend. Select 'Sport' mode and you'll have access to all the power the 1260 Enduro has to offer. This would be a guaranteed short cut to an early grave if it wasn't for the sophisticated suite of electronics working overtime to reduce the chances of things going very wrong. Say what you will





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about the amount of electronics crammed into modern motorcycles, but in a machine as big and powerful as this, I'm grateful to have the three-level cornering ABS, traction control, semi-active suspension and wheelie control looking out for me, particularly on slippery winter roads.

There are lighter and more agile adventure bikes out there if you like to spend you're weekends with your knee down (the more road focused Multistrada 1260 S being one of them), for those of us who enjoy taking on a few twisty turns as part of a wider riding mix, the Multistrada Enduro does a great job. That wider riding mix will also likely involve more relaxed weekend touring, perhaps with your better half onboard. Here again, the 1260 Enduro excels. The fact it is so well behaved at more sedate speeds surprised me. I expected this Italian stallion to constantly be straining at the leash to go faster, but in actual fact the bike is happy to canter along sun-dappled lanes effortlessly. The 1260 Enduro has the manners of a gentleman and the heart of a cage fighter, which is a recipe for a fun weekend.

AS A CONTINENTAL ROAD TOURER

Perhaps surprisingly for a bike designed to be ridden off road, the Multistrada Enduro makes for a superb continental road tourer. In fact, I'd rank it below only the Honda Goldwing as the most comfortable bike I've ridden over long distances. The comfy seat, upright riding position, and near perfect hands, feet, backside position makes long days in the saddle a pleasure, not a chore. I've regularly ridden 250-mile stints without a stop and I've never experienced any muscular pain from riding the Ducati, just the usual aches from not having stretched in a while. Those long stints in between stops are made possible by the huge 30l fuel tank which has taken me more than 300 miles without the need to be gentle on the throttle. Until you've ridden a bike with such a large fuel capacity, you don't realise what a luxury it is not having to stop to fill up as often as you usually would, or worry about running out of fuel.

Pop the 1260 Enduro's 158 bhp engine, into 'Touring' mode and the bike will propel you, your luggage and a loved one over long distances effortlessly. Trust me, I've spent plenty of days rinsing the last few ponies out of lower-powered bikes along French Toll roads and it's an exhausting experience. I'll take the power of the 1260 any day. All that poke means the bike doesn't struggle to carry a heavy payload, which is handy because the Ducati-branded Touratech panniers are huge. Ours has 40l storage capacity on the right and 45l on the left, which is more than enough room to fit a couple of weeks' worth of touring kit inside, including a tent if that's your thing.

Ride comfort isn't adversely affected by the extra weight thanks to the electronically controlled semi-active suspension which you can tune to compensate for the extra weight. The addition of cruise control, a very good quickshifter, keyless ignition and an electronic steering lock all make touring a more relaxed affair.

The only gripe I have with the Multistrada Enduro's long-distance credentials is with the size of the screen. Despite the fact it is wonderfully simple to adjust on the move, I find as a 6ft-tall man it isn't quite wide enough at the bottom, resulting in a fair amount of wind buffeting to the sides of my helmet, to the extent that I struggle to hear my intercom. This could be fixed with the addition of some wind deflectors that would help improve what is already a formidable continental road tourer. However, if you don't have any ambitions to stray away from the tarmac, you may also want to check out the road-focused Multistrada 1260 S Grand Tour.

AS AN RTW OVERLANDER

Unfortunately, I haven't had the chance to ride the 1260 Enduro around the globe but I'm confident it would make for a very capable RTW machine. Its long-distance touring credentials previously outlined would make covering vast swathes of the globe a very civilised affair. That 30l fuel



tank would also prove extremely useful in more remote parts of the world where stops between petrol stations can be hundreds of miles apart. But what makes the 1260 Enduro a world beater is its genuine offroad capability. The bike has a wonderfully natural standing position and genuinely feels light and agile on loose ground. There is also plenty of ground clearance and suspension travel to help navigate rough surfaces, and the engine is suitably tractable at slower speeds to navigate trickier terrain.

However, there is an elephant in the room, and that is once again the size of the bike. While it is a very capable machine off road in the right hands, for the average rider, and I count myself in this group, I can imagine navigating through areas of deep sand or mud in remote parts of the world would become a torturous exercise in picking up a downed big adventure bike multiple times. In these circumstances, I'd want a smaller, lighter motorcycle.

In short, stick to the tarmac and the 1260 Enduro would make for superb RTW overlander. Throw in rocky, sandy or gravelly terrain and you'll conquer all in your path. However, if you plan to travel the gnarly way round, I'd want to be confident I could handle a big, heavy bike in the toughest of terrains before heading off around the world on the 1260 Enduro.

AS A PILLION CARRIER

I loathe riding pillion on a motorcycle. Perhaps it's because I have trust issues, but the thought of someone else being in control of a bike while I'm perched helplessly on the back brings me out in a cold sweat. That said, if I was to ride pillion on an adventure bike, the 1260 Enduro would be a my choice. I've had particularly good feedback about the comfort of the seat and the fact there is plenty of space between the rider and pillion, which means you and your beloved don't need to be squashed together for hours on end on the road. The grab rails and footpegs have also been positioned for both ease of use and comfort, which all help make for a happy passenger and an enjoyable touring experience.

From a rider's perspective, the ability to electronically adjust the suspension to compensate for the extra weight a pillion rider brings is great and has meant I haven't felt any front-end vagueness in the steering associated with weighing down a bike at the rear. There is also more than enough power on hand to ensure that extra weight of a passenger and their luggage isn't particularly noticeable under acceleration. In short, the 1260 Enduro is a big bike that easily accommodates the addition of a passenger in comfort with

little impact on ride quality. It would be my number one choice for my next tour with my wife.

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- **PRICE** From £17,755
- ENGINE Ducati Testastretta 1262 liquid-cooled, L-Twin 2-cylinder, four stroke engine
- **POWER** 158bhp @ 9,500rpm
- **TORQUE** 128 Nm at 7500rpm
- SUSPENSION Front; 48mm fullyadjustable USD forks, electronic compression and rebound adjustment with Evo Ducati Skyhook Suspension. Rear; Fullyadjustable Ducati monoshock with electronic compression and rebound adjustment with Evo Ducati Skyhook suspension
- BRAKES Front; Twin 320mm semi-floating discs with radially mounted Brembo M4 32-piston calipers. Bosch cornering ABS
- SEAT HEIGHT 860mm
- **TANK CAPACITY** 30L
- **WEIGHT** 254kg





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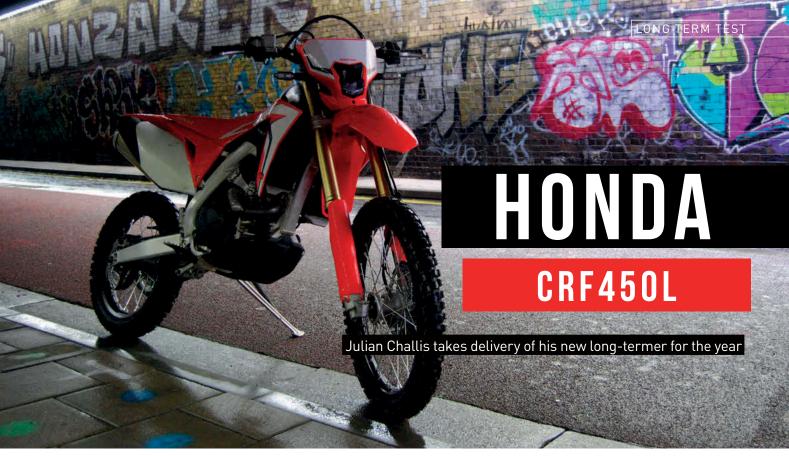
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ith my former long-term test bike, the KTM 690 Enduro R, returned to sender, there was a bike-shaped space in the

garage that needed filling. And, I'm happy to report that, almost seamlessly, it's been filled with a sparkly red CRF450L which looks to be the ideal replacement to allow me to continue my exploration of the tracks and trails of the UK, and hopefully beyond.

When the production of the 450L was first announced by Honda last year, there was a certain excitement as to the potential of the new bike. Its younger sibling, the CRF250L has proved to be a popular bike among the green laning and small adventure bike community, with buyers loving its cheap purchase price, tiny running costs and huge service intervals. The hopes were that the 450L would offer much the same, but with a more powerful motor to help it better handle bigger distances.

But when the specification and the price for the 450L were released, it seemed that the expectations of the market were a long way away from what Honda had been thinking. Far from an uprated version of the 250L, the new 450 was far more like a reined in version of the existing enduro bike, the 450X. There was no sign of the cheap and cheerful steel frame and low-tech motor, no sign of the tiny running costs thanks to recommended oil changes around every 600 miles, and as for the

price, this bike was north of £9,000.

In a sense, this disconnect between expectation and reality - which was largely beyond Honda's control or indeed making overshadowed the bike's launch at the Dave Thorpe Honda Off-Road Centre last year. I unfortunately missed the event as I was marooned on a Greek island by a Mediterranean hurricane, but all that attended and rode the bike were unanimously enthusiastic about how enjoyable the new 450L actually was. Yes, the peak horsepower was artificially low to meet the somewhat draconian Euro 4 regulations, but with oodles of torque, competent suspension and a frame lifted straight out of the MXGP championship winning bike, the 450L was a great package, albeit an expensive one.

We got an extended chance to try the 450L at the rather fantastic ABR Festival in July. Honda loaned us a box-fresh machine for the duration of the event, and as I'd been appointed travelling marshall, safety officer and stinky bog monitor on the Adventure Trail, I got to spend a good deal of time with Big Red. And I have to say I was mightily impressed too. The CRF had the potential to be a perfect year-round trail bike, and with a bit of fettling, a cracking lightweight adventure bike. And, with the promise of a newly available power-up kit that effectively doubles the power, I would have been more than happy to take it home there and then.

So, six months later and thanks to a chance conversation with the estimable Mr Thorpe on the Africa Twin launch in Sardinia, I headed down to Fowlers of Bristol to collect my new squeeze just in time for Christmas. The weather might have taken a decidedly Arctic turn, but after grabbing a few gritty urban snaps to keep *ABR* Editor Bryn and Assistant Editor James happy, I was straight out onto the rough stuff to start as I meant to go on. On the cards I've got the Great Western Trail, a cross Pennine adventure, North Wales, South Devon. This bike is going to get some serious use and abuse. Bring it on!

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- **PRICE** £9,469
- ENGINE liquid-cooled, singlecylinder, four-stroke unicam
- **DISPLACEMENT** 449.7cc
- MAXIMUM POWER 24.6 bhp
- SUSPENSION Front; fullyadjustable 49mm leading-axle inverted telescopic Showa coilspring fork. Rear; fully-adjustable Showa single shock
- **▶ BRAKES** Front; 2-piston caliper hydraulic. Rear; 1-piston caliper hydraulic
- **TYRES** Front; 80/100 21-inch tyres. Rear; 120/80 18-inch tyres
- WEIGHT 235kg (wet)
- **TANK CAPACITY** 7.6 litres
- **TANK RANGE** 110 miles
- SEAT HEIGHT 940mm



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started this year without a motorcycle license and I'm ending it as a full-time biker. This wasn't entirely through my own

choice as my car was written off in an accident. Thankfully no-one was hurt and the loss of the car means I have fully embraced life on two-wheels, which I'm exceptionally happy about.

Some of the reasons for my glee are already known by every biker across the land. I smile when I come downstairs on a cold winter morning and simply jump on my bike and ride off, much to the dismay of my housemates and neighbours who are normally halfway through de-icing a windscreen. I'm still smiling as I whizz past a traffic jam, particularly if it's first thing in the morning and the same traffic would have made me late in the car. Some of the reasons for my grin, however, are specifically due to the V-Strom 650 I am riding.

Despite not having the power of some of the bigger adventure bikes, I find flicking past just about any vehicle an effortless task. At 70mph in top gear, I am at around 4,000 rpm, leaving plenty of punch in reserve that I rarely use. Economically, the V-Strom has proved kind to my wallet, averaging 63mpg and getting nearly 300 miles out of the 20l fuel tank.

In the six months I've been riding the bike, I haven't had a single issue. It's been exceptionally reliable and lived up to the workhorse reputation the V-Strom has become known for. Admittedly, I haven't done anything particularly hardcore, but for a first bike, it's tackled everything I have asked, including a daily commute, a couple of longer distance trips, plenty of full days in the saddle, and even some light off-roading.

The bike continues to prove comfortable over long distances, with Suzuki's 'Comfort Seat' being well named. However, as I gain more experience in the saddle, I've found myself becoming a bit more critical. The high footrests force more of a knee bend than I would like and, when I'm stood up, the handlebars feel very low. At 6ft 2 inches, it may be because I'm simply too tall for the bike.

I've also found myself looking enviously at other motorcycles, and in particular the new V-Strom 1050 which I spotted at Motorcycle Live. It looked so rugged and cool that I have to admit I stood in front of it at the bike show mentally figuring out my finances to see if I could afford to buy one.

I think I'll stick to the 650 for now

though, and I'm looking forward to piling on some more miles on it throughout the year. With this in mind, I'll be adding some heated grips, luggage and a more effective screen – the standard screen means I get a fair bit of wind blast on my face. With these accessories onboard, I'm planning to take my first bike trip abroad. I can't wait to see what my V-Strom can do in the mountain passes of the Alps!

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- **PRICE** £7,599
- **ENGINE** 645cc, 4-stroke, liquid-cooled, DOHC, 90-degree V-twin
- POWER 70bhp at 8,800rpm
- **▼ TORQUE** 62Nm at 6,500rpm
- SUSPENSION Front; Telescopic, coil spring, oil damped. Rear; Link type, coil spring, oil damped
- **⊘ GEARBOX** 6-speed constant mesh
- SEAT HEIGHT 835mm
- ✓ WEIGHT 213kg (wet)
- **▼ TANK CAPACITY 201**
- FUEL CONSUMPTION 67.26mpg (claimed)



fter spending thousands of miles riding through everything Mother Nature can throw at man and machine, I've come to the conclusion there is no need to be cold or wet while riding a motorcycle, whatever the time of year. If I do suffer from the elements, it's because I've made the wrong gear choices (or I couldn't afford the right choices). It's taken me a few years to reach this conclusion but, after much trial and error, I've found the right combination of motorcycle clothing will keep me protected and comfortable in the saddle here in the UK no matter the weather.

Four–season jackets and trousers are designed to help you do just this. Now, when I refer to a four–season suit, I'm talking about a jacket and trousers combination that will perform in the fourth season – winter. Ideally it will be waterproof, windproof, fit comfortably, and protect you if you have an accident. It should also be stylish and sold at a price that provides good value for money. However, if, like me, you tend to wear the same jacket and trousers for most of the year, you should ideally be able to wear a four–season suit comfortably when the weather improves. This means it needs to have plenty of vents to allow cool air to flow around your body on those balmy summer rides.

Personally, I've never found a jacket and trousers combination that can perform at an optimal level in every season (although the REV'IT! suit in this test may prove the exception). For example, a heavy suit that helps keep you insulated, warm and dry in cold temperatures will likely struggle to be the lightweight, cool summer jacket you're looking to tour the South of France in. With

this in mind, this group test focuses on the winter performance of the four-season suits we've tested, while keeping one eye on how comfortable they would be to wear in the warmer months.

The jackets and trousers we've tested break down into two groups – laminated suits and those that feature a three–layer system. There are pros and cons of each, but after riding in both, I've come to the conclusion that laminated gear is by far the best option for general mixed riding such as commuting, weekend blasts and touring. Laminated motorcycle clothing features a waterproof membrane, such as Gore–Tex, that is bonded to the inside of the textile material of your jacket, making it as waterproof and windproof as you can get. This means you don't need to faff around putting on separate waterproof layers under or over your jacket and trousers because you are already wearing one. Laminated suits are also usually sold with a removable thermal inner liner to help keep you warm.

A downside to laminated motorcycle gear is the fact it tends to allow less airflow to your body, which can result in you feeling hot when the ambient temperature rises. The simple way to solve this problem is to buy a jacket with plenty of vents to allow cool air to pass through, ideally with flaps that can be pinned back to help scoop in as much air as possible. Despite claims from manufacturers about the breathable properties of materials such as Gore-Tex, in real world conditions the benefits are limited on a motorcycle. Adequate venting is far more important in the heat.

Unfortunately, due to higher manufacturing costs, laminated jackets and trousers are usually more expensive than the alterna-



tive – suits that feature the three-layer system. A three-layer suit will come with an outer protective layer, a detachable waterproof mid layer, and a detachable thermal inner layer, which together make up the three layers. This is the Swiss army knife approach to motorcycle clothing because you can add or remove a layer to suit the conditions. Perfect, right? Not quite.

There are two main limitations to this system. Firstly, the textile material of your outer motorcycle jacket will not be waterproof, instead it will be the separate liner inside that keeps you dry. This means the outside of your jacket will soak up water when it rains and it won't be long before it becomes saturated and 'wets out'. This will make the jacket heavy and cold. Combine this with the wind chill of riding a bike at motorway speeds and you'll soon feel like you're sat in a fridge.

The second limitation of the three-layer system is related to venting. Your vents will be less effective because there is a waterproof and windproof layer under them, greatly reducing the amount of cooling air that passes through. You could simply remove the waterproof layer, but you'll have to stop by the side of the road and put it back on again when time it rains. By the time you've done this you'll probably be wet anyway. A much better solution is to buy a waterproof over jacket and keep it to hand in a pannier or map pouch.

Whatever four-season suit you opt for, make sure it fits correctly by trying it on before you buy. In particular, make sure the jacket doesn't ride up and expose your back when reaching for the handlebars (this is why you'll see plenty of riders crouching on

an imaginary bike in motorcycle clothing stores). Also ensure the trousers are the right length so that the knee armour sits over you knee when you're on the bike.

In terms of protection, your suit should be made from an abrasion resistant material that is reinforced in high-impact areas. It should also come with CE-approved armour on the elbows, shoulders and knees as a minimum. Back and chest protectors are also very welcome additions which aren't seen enough, even in high-end gear.

When buying a four-season suit, look for zips that are water resistant and feature a storm flap to stop rain seeping through. Also look for waterproof pockets so you can keep essentials like a phone and wallet to hand. A pet hate of mine is pockets on a jacket that zip up sideways, rather than horizontally. This makes far too easy for your belongings to fall out if you forget to fasten the zip. I have a friend who did exactly this and he lost his house and garage keys on a motorway, resulting in expense and hassle at the end of a long day in the saddle.

Another thing to keep in mind is even the best four-season suit will not keep you protected from bad weather on its own during winter. You'll also need a good pair of gloves and boots, and I'd highly recommend investing in some heated gear for longer rides. However, choose the right jacket and trousers and you're well on the way to ensuring winter riding is a pleasure not a chore.

With this in mind, we've put nine four-season suits to the test from across the price range to discover which ones are worth spending your hard-earned cash on.



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FEATURES

OF A FOUR SEASON SUIT

JACKET

NECK AND COLLAR CLOSURES

We don't like press-studs as they're too fiddly. Velcro is better, but can be an irritant, magnetic closures are the most user-friendly but not widely available. A detachable neck/chin scarf offers the best protection from the elements.

ZIPS

Water-resistant zips (they are never fully waterproof) are very effective at keeping water at bay. Standard zips need to be protected by storm flaps, especially the main zip, which sould be covered by a double storm flap. Chunky, glove-friendly zip pulls are better than small, fiddly ones.

CE-APPROVED ARMOUR

While textile jackets and trousers offer an amount of abrasion resistance, it's the armour that's going to provide the initial impact protection. Make sure it's CE-approved for the most protection, with Level 2 offering more impact resistance than Level 1.

VENTS

Breathability of a jacket is often oversold. Four season jackets should be warm to deal with cold weather riding, but for when the going gets warm, effective ventilation is key. Vents that can be secured in the open position are most effective, while exhaust vents are essential to allow a cross-flow of air from front to back.

CUFFS

A Velcro closure adjustment offers greater versatility for fit and a small, well-cut bellows avoids bunching up of the fabric and easier glove fitment.

WAIST ADJUSTERS

Velcro or buttoned waist adjusters help fine tune the fit of a jacket and play an essential part in trapping warm air for added insulation.

STORM FLAPS

Like vents, zips are weak spots through which the elements can pass through. In our experience, if you're going to be riding in heavy rain, a double storm flap which protects the main zip is ideal.

POCKETS

Pockets are essential for keeping stuff close to hand. They need to offer easy access, be waterproof, and be big enough for your needs.

INSULATION

A thermal drop liner will help insulate your body and legs by trapping warm air. In many cases, it's often better to buy a separate, higher quality thermal jacket to use as a mid-layer, while standard thermal liners are usually warm enough for your legs.

INNER MESH LINING

If the jacket or trousers feature a laminated waterproof membrane, it'll need a mesh liner to allow sweat to be wicked away from your skin and to protect the membrane from abrasion and dirt on your body. A mesh liner will also aid in comfort.

TROUSERS

Many of the features of a jacket you'll also find on a pair of trousers, but there are a few extra to look out for.

ANKLE CLOSURES

This is a delicate topic. All trousers need some sort of mechanism to help get them over your boots, and Velcro has a tendency to clog with mud. A zip could be too tight depending on the type of boots you're wearing, and press studs will also clog with mud. For standard road riding, you'll be fine with Velcro.

BRACES

In my opinion, braces should come as standard on all motorcycle trousers. They help keep them in the right place (and help prevent the armour from moving) and prevent the dreaded biker bum.

Braces will also help keep the wet stuff out by pulling the trousers up, while a protective bib will offer the best in weather protection.

ARMR MOTO TOTTORI 3 JACKET - £159.99, TROUSERS - £179.99

WWW.TRI-MOTIV.COM



f you're shopping on a budget, you'll have no doubt come across Armr Moto before. The brand was created by British distribution company Tri-Motive, and the Armr Moto website claims that the company brings together 'quality, protection, comfort and style at the best possible price'. There's certainly no denying that the Tottori 3 jacket, which is Armr Moto's submission to this four-season test, offers a very attractive price (£159.99), but does it offer performance in the saddle to make it a worthwhile purchase?

The Tottori 3 is the newest textile suit in Armr's range, being introduced for 2019, and it comes complete with CE-approved protectors in the elbows, shoulders, and on the back. Waterproofing is provided by a removable Reissa membrane, while you also get an Armr Multi Season Liner system to provide insulation.

Having CE-approved armour in a jacket of this price is excellent, and it fits nicely and is well-placed. The thermal lining however, is remarkably thin and offers little in the form of warmth. With this in mind, you'll want to ditch it and use a more substantial mid-layer for all but summer rides. When it comes to waterproofing, the removable liner does keep the wet stuff at bay, but the outer fabric wets out very fast, quickly becoming saturated with water and getting very cold in cooler weather.

If you're riding in fine weather though, the Tottori 3 performs well. Take out the liners and you're left with a protective shell that features a substantial amount of ventilation, including two large vents on the forearms and two gaping chest vents that are similar to those found on the more expensive REV'IT! Poseidon 2 in this test. Open them all up and a welcome, cooling flow of air is sucked in, being drawn through by two exhaust vents at the rear.

In terms of comfort, the Tottori 3 performs well. The cut of it is perfect for the adventure motorcycling stance, the torso is long to offer more

weather protection and to prevent riding up, and the neoprene-lined collar is delightfully soft against the neck. The jacket is also well-specced for storage, with there being four external pockets on the front, a large map pouch on the rear, a zipped internal chest pocket, and a nicely-sized internal phone pouch.

The waist of the jacket is adjustable to provide a fine-tuned fit, and the main zip is protected by a substantial storm flap to prevent water ingress here. Frustratingly, the cuffs are too tight to fit comfortably over most gloves. They just about squeezed over my summer-weight gloves, but even the thinnest of insulated winter gloves were a struggle. With this, it's near-impossible to close the forearm zip completely, and the Velcro tab isn't long enough to create a secure fit.

There is however a frustrating flaw with the jacket that, for me, would rule it out for four-season riding. There are two, large vents on the forearms that are very welcome in warm weather, but if it starts raining, they're a weak spot for water to get in. The zips aren't waterproof, and rain penetrated through them rather quickly. They are backed by the removable waterproof lining, but all this does is force water down your arms and into your gloves. This obviously isn't ideal when it's cold and wet.

CONCLUSION

All in all, the Tottori 3 is a budget jacket that performs well in some instances, but poorly in others. As a good-weather jacket, it's fine. In fact, the ample ventilation, comfortable fit, and included CE armour make it good value for money. But for four-season use, there are a couple of flaws that mean you'd be in for a wet and cold ride in the winter.

IN A LINE: Easy on the wallet, but flawed.

RST PRO SERIES ADVENTURE X JACKET - £299.99, TROUSERS - £219.99

WWW.RST-MOTO.COM



he RST Pro Series Adventure X suit is brand-new for 2020, taking over from the RST Pro Series Adventure III. The Adventure III was a fine piece of kit indeed, particularly at its price point, and it's one of the most fully-featured textile suits I've come across. The Adventure X builds on that, adding a handful of improvements in an attempt to create the ultimate adventure suit.

THE JACKET

When you take a close look at the Pro Series Adventure X jacket, the amount of features and attention to detail is remarkable. It feels like RST has taken a textile jacket wishlist and thrown it at the suit.

Protection is well thought out, with CE level 2 armour inserts on the shoulders and elbows and also the back (a great inclusion for this price point), while you also get large external TPU shoulder protectors. Hard-wearing areas, like the elbows and shoulders, are reinforced to help fight back against abrasion if you're unlucky enough to take a slide down the road.

Weatherproofing is provided by a removable insulated liner that's also bonded with a SinAqua Pro membrane. I must admit, I'm not the biggest fan of this set up. The thermal liner is warm enough for autumn and spring riding, but get to the depths of winter and you'll want to swap it out for a jacket with better insulation. Do that, and you'll lose the waterproof lining as well. While a laminated jacket is preferred for wet-weather riding, a three-layer set up would work better here (as was offered with the Adventure III) than a combined thermal and waterproof lining. It's the only change from the old model to the new that I can't get my head around.

Venting is exceptional. The large chest vents are well placed and suck in a lot of air. They can also be zipped away so there's no flapping material. These vents are complimented by perforated panels on the upper chest, two vents on the shoulders, large zipped vents on the forearms, and two exhaust vents.

Other useful features include a water bladder pouch on the rear (with routing for a hose), a large pocket on the rear that can be detached and used as a bum bag, a delightfully soft and insulated removable collar, adjustment points on the arms and waist, two large handwarmer pockets, and an internal chest pocket.

THE TROUSERS

The trousers of the Pro Series Adventure X (called jeans by RST) follow the same ethos as the jacket. They're well-featured and designed for adventurous riding throughout the year. The ventilation is exceptional, thanks to four well placed and sized vents and perforated upper thighs, and the thermal lining is soft next to skin. Take it out and the inner of the trousers is still a joy to wear.

In terms of pockets you get two large cargo pouches on the thigh, and two zippable hip pockets. CE level 2 armour is provided at the knees, and there are hip pouches should you want to add your own protection here. There's plenty of adjustment in the waist belt, the ankle cuffs are large enough for adventure boots, and the knees have stretch panels for a better range of movement.

CONCLUSION

The RST Adventure X suit is, for this price, an exceptional piece of kit. It's overloaded with features and each one has a genuine use. It's comfortable to wear, looks great in black, and offers incredible value for money.

It'll excel when in good weather thanks to its ample ventilation, great fit, and added features. For mid-winter riding it would need to be paired with a set of waterproof overalls, but do this and you've got a great piece of kit. For 2020, there's also an airbag option for £499.99.

IN A LINE: Exceptional value for money and a great suit with the addition of a waterproof oversuit.

OXFORD HINTERLAND

JACKET - **£299.99**, TROUSERS - **£169.99**

WWW.OXFORDPRODUCTS.COM



ritish manufacturer Oxford has a habit of producing good motorcycle gear at extremely reasonable prices. It's usually not the flashiest but I've always found it can be relied upon to the do the job. This is why I've awarded Oxford products the 'Best Budget Buy' accolade on more than one occasion in ABR group tests.

JACKET

Oxford's new for 2020 Hinterland jacket looks set to push Oxford's reputation for value further by offering a laminated jacket for just £300. This is significantly cheaper than any of the other laminated jackets on test.

Water and windproofing is covered by a Dry2Dry laminated membrane so the jacket won't wet out when the heavens open. All the zips are either water resistant or feature storm flaps to keep the rain out. Warmth is provided by a removable inner thermal layer, which is on the thin side and I'd be tempted to replace it with something warmer for colder rides.

In terms of protection the Hinterland has CE-level 1 armour in the shoulders and elbows and is made from an abrasion resistant nylon outer shell. Overall, it looks like a well put together jacket. It may not have the premium feel of the likes of the REV'IT! Poseidon 2, but then it's half the price.

In terms of storage, the Hinterland features two side opening front pockets with waterproof zips, as well as a side opening map pouch at the rear. It also has three inside pockets, and two more in the removable thermal liner.

The fit is a little shorter in the body than I would like to see in a touring jacket, but the Hinterland isn't necessarily designed for that use. Despite this, it feels comfortable to wear, the sleeves didn't ride up when I reached for the handlebars and the cuffs went over a pair of winter gloves easily.

There are two large vents on the forearms and at the waist with water resistant zips, as well as exhaust vent at the rear. The vents are a decent size although the jacket wouldn't be my first choice to take on a

hot summer tour. However, the vents would be more than adequate for a dash across the city or Sunday ride.

TROUSERS

Oxford doesn't have matching trousers for the Hinterland so they submitted their Continental Advanced trouser for this test. It isn't laminated, but at £160, still represents good value for money. The Continental Advanced is made from abrasion resistant nylon and features armour on the hips and knees. There is a removable thermal layer and a non-removable waterproof inner liner. The trousers feature an impressive four pockets – two on the hips sealed by water resistant zips, and a further two cargo style pockets on the outer thigh

The Continental Advanced also come with a set of removable braces to help improve fit which is a feature I would have liked to have seen on some of the more expensive trousers in this test. These are comfortable trousers to wear, aided by stretch panels on the knees and back to aid flexibility.

For summer riding, there are two large vents under the cargo pockets which can be pinned pack to allow air through. However, their effectiveness is going to be curtailed by the fact there is a waterproof liner sat behind them.

CONCLUSION

If you have your heart set on a laminated jacket and you're on a budget, the Oxford Hinterland will do the job, although as an adventure rider, I'd probably be looking at a three-layer jacket with more features for around the same price. The Continental Advanced trousers are a bit of a steal at the price, although the lack of direct venting may cause your temperature to rise in warmer temperatures.

IN A LINE: They'll do the job at a great price.

KTM ADVENTURE S

JACKET - **£428.16**, TROUSERS - **£331.86**

WWW KTM COM





y first thought when I unpacked the KTM Adventure S was 'thank God it's not bright orange'. On closer inspection the Adventure S, which forms part of the Austrian manufacturer's line of PowerWear clothing, proved to be a rather stylish piece of clothing which uses a combination of goatskin leather and textile material. And, at £760 for the jacket and trousers, it's also reasonably priced.

JACKET

The KTM branding on the jacket is restricted to small logos on the shoulders, chest, and collar, with a larger reflective logo on the back which blends into the background by day. The result is I've been more than happy to wear it on the Ducati Multistrada I've been riding lately, as well as around town when I'm off the bike without feeling like a bit of plonker.

The Adventure S is made from a combination of abrasion and tear resistant nylon and leather. The use of leather on the elbows, arms, collar and shoulders is a stylish touch and also a good safety feature. CE level 2 armour can be found in the shoulders and elbows, and there is a pocket for a back protector which, disappointingly, needs to be bought as an extra.

Overall, the Adventure S feels like a quality item of motorcycle clothing with neat stitching and seams, and a good attention to detail. Little touches like the addition of rubber tabs to help you open the pockets while wearing gloves reveal plenty of thought has gone into designing the jacket.

Inside is a removable thermal lining featuring two pockets. The liner feels a little thinner than some of the others in this test, and I found myself using a good thermal base layer to ensure I stayed warm while riding on cold evenings. However, it does make for a rather stylish standalone jacket.

There are two ample-sized pockets on the front of the jacket, along with a smaller one at the chest. However, there is no map pouch at the rear which may or may not be an issue for you.

There are two small vents on the front of the jacket and these are complimented by large vents on each sleeve and an innovative double zipping system at the front. Basically, there are two ways you can close the jacket. The first is for cold weather riding and seals out wind and rain, while the second features a vent running the full length of the jacket, allowing cooling air to reach your body. It's a nice touch and makes me think the Adventure S could be a genuine contender as a year-round jacket.

TROUSERS

The Adventure S trousers offer more of the same. They're made from the same mix of goatskin leather and nylon, with leather position on the backside and inner calf, as well as on the hips. There is also CE-level 1 armour on the hips and level 2 on the knees. Comfort and warmth are aided by the presence of a removable thermal liner, with the fit of the trousers allowing for a good range of movement. That fit can be tailored at the waist with the use of a Velcro adjuster. Venting is bit limited with only two small vents above the knee. I have to admit I'm not sure about having the words 'ready to race' written across my backside, but if you already ride a KTM, you may not mind.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the KTM Adventure S is a very well made, stylish and high performing jacket and trousers combination available at a reasonable price. If I was to ride in freezing temperatures regularly, I would replace the thermal mid-layer with something warmer. The innovative venting system also means it will perform all year round. If you're looking for a touring suit and you ride KTM, it would make a good buy. And the relatively subtle branding could make it worth a serious look even if you don't ride for team orange.

IN A LINE: Style and performance at an affordable price.

SPIDI ALPENTROPHY

JACKET - £454.99, TROUSERS - £322.99

WWW.SPIDIUK.COM



ake a look at the Spidi website and you'll see the Alpentrophy jacket modestly described as 'one of the best adventure touring motorcycle jackets in the world'. That's a bold claim, but you've got to admire the company's confidence in its kit! With that said, I must admit, the Italian brand does have a reputation for manufacturing quality gear, so I was interested to see how the Alpentrophy fared.

THE JACKET

The Alpentrophy jacket is a stylish piece of kit. The fit is decidedly Italian and is definitely on the small side, so be prepared to size up. With this in mind, the cut is quite short.

As standard, the Alpentrophy jacket comes with CE level 2 armour on the shoulders and elbows, which feels substantial yet comfortable when worn. This is, as you would expect, removable. You also get provisions to add a back protector and there are attachment points for chest protectors. I might be stingy, but for a £450 jacket, I'd like a back protector included as standard.

Waterproofing is provided by a laminated H2Out membrane, and this does a good job of keeping the wet stuff out. You'll also find a substantial two-way Velcro storm flap protecting the main zip. On the subject of the main zip, I found it to be a bit short, with there being a good three inches of space at the bottom of it. This allows the jacket to spread open at the bottom and will be a weak spot for water ingress.

The thermal liner is great. With 150g of synthetic insulating fill it offers a lot of warmth and is very comfortable to wear. My only niggle is in the way it secures to the outer layer, via two poppers on either side of the main zip. These are too easy to un-pop, and a zip-in system would have been preferred.

The fit of the jacket is nicely customisable, with the collar having a Velcro-adjustable collar, and you get adjustable waist straps and a pull-cord-adjustable hem. The cuffs are adjustable as well, though they're very slimline

and it's difficult to fit a pair of winter gloves under them. Frustratingly, the zip also tends to snag a lot. In terms of storage, you get plenty, there being four outer pockets, a rear pocket, a waterproof chest pocket, while there's also a large mesh pouch on the thermal liner.

Ventilation is provided by two large chest vents and two exhaust vents. These aren't as effective as those found on some of the other jackets on test, but they're welcome when the temperatures start rising.

THE TROUSERS

Like the jacket, the Alpentrophy trousers make use of a laminated H2Out membrane to provide waterproofing and this performs well. The fit, again, is on the small side so you'll want to try these on before you buy them. All of my adventure touring boots were too chunky to fit under the ankle cuffs. This is a big oversight on trousers that are specifically designed for touring.

If you can get past the tight fit and the small ankle cuffs, the Alpentours are good. CE level 1 armour is provided on the hips and knees, the included thermal liner is comfortable and warm, and the stretch panels on the knees allow for a good range of movement. In terms of storage, the only pockets you get are two hip pockets which, although comfortable, don't have any zip closures, so they're unsecure, particularly while riding.

CONCLUSION

All in all, the Spidi Alpentrophy suit is a bit hit and miss. It's comfortable, genuinely waterproof, and the components feel well made. The jacket and trouser combo looks good and they zip in together, but I can't see myself wearing this throughout the winter with the wrist and ankle cuffs being too restrictive for touring boots and insulated gloves,

IN A LINE: A good suit if you have thin calves and wrists.

REV'IT! POSEIDON 2 GTX JACKET - £679.99, TROUSERS - £499.99

WWW.REVITSPORT.COM



EV'IT! has built a reputation for producing high-quality motorcycle clothing that looks and feels great. The Poseidon 2 GTX jacket and trousers are yet another example of this. It's clear these are very well-made pieces of kit, with every stitch, seam and join finished neatly. However, this premium quality is reflected in the price, with the jacket and trousers setting you back almost £1,200 between them.

JACKET

The jacket is made from high-tenacity abrasion-and-tear-resistant nylon, which is reinforced in high-impact areas, such as the elbows, arms and shoulders, to provide extra tear and abrasion resistance.

Armour comes in the form of REV'IT!'s flexible and comfortable SEEFLEX CE-level 2 inserts in the elbows and shoulders. There is also a pocket provided for a back protector but you'll have to buy this as an extra. I'd like to see one included in a jacket at this price.

The Poseidon 2 GTX has been designed to be a lightweight, flexible, yet durable suit. It features a laminated three-layer and two-layer Gore-Tex membrane in different areas which is bonded to the material to make the suit waterproof. This means the jacket won't get saturated with rain and become heavy and cold when wet.

All the outer zips are water resistant and feature a storm flap which prevents rain seeping inside. The jacket also comes with a removable storm collar, fastened with a zip, which covers your neck. A nice touch is the use of neoprene around the chin and neck to prevent chaffing

The Poseidon 2 GTX is warm thanks to a removable insulated layer, so much so I've only been wearing a T-shirt underneath during my commute to work on chilly mornings here in the UK.

But, as well as being warm and waterproof, there's plenty to suggest the Poseidon 2 GTX will perform when the mercury rises, with ample venting on offer. This includes two large vents on the chest and thighs that allow direct ventilation to your body. They can be unzipped and pinned to a neat-looking Fidlock fastener featuring a magnet, which is easy to use while wearing riding gloves. There are also two additional vents at the upper arm and exhausts on the back, which should all provide plenty of airflow on hot days.

The Poseidon 2 GTX has a touring fit, so it's long enough to cover my torso without riding up and exposing my back when I'm in the saddle and it's flexible enough not to feel at all restrictive. Overall, it's a comfortable jacket to wear.

TROUSERS

The Poseidon 2 GTX trousers feature the same excellent design and build quality of the jacket. Legs are kept warm and dry by a comfy, removable, insulated liner, along with the water and windproof properties of the two and three-layer Gore-tex laminate. Protection comes in the form of CE-level 2 armour at the knees and level 1 at the hips.

The trousers fit naturally around my waist and legs with little restriction of movement. Adjustments can be made by tightening or loosening straps on the legs and waist. There are two pockets at the hips featuring waterproof zips that are big enough to fit a wallet or phone. The trousers also have large direct vents that can be pinned back to provide cooling airflow in summer.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the Poseidon 2 GTX suit is a thoughtfully designed, well-made, comfortable and stylish piece of motorcycle clothing. It's a premium piece of kit with a price to match, but for the money you will get a four-season suit you can genuinely wear all year around in style and comfort.

IN A LINE: A true all-season touring jacket and trousers.





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BMW STREETGUARD SUIT

JACKET - **£699**, TROUSERS - **£535**

WWW.BMW-MOTORRAD.CO.UK





s part of BMW's 11-strong range of riding suits, the StreetGuard sits itself amongst the most expensive of the company's offerings. With a combined price of £1,234, the StreetGuard is a significant investment but, having worn it in some terrible weather, it's one you won't be disappointed with if you ride in all seasons.

THE JACKET

The StreetGuard jacket is a highly-specced piece of kit. The fit is just about perfect for adventure bike touring, with the torso offering a good amount of length to prevent riding up.

Protection comes in the form of substantial CE Level 2 BMW NP2 protectors on the elbows and shoulders, while a level 2 back protector is also included. All of this armour is well-placed and is comfortable all day long. On the outside, areas that are more likely to scrape against the road are double-lined with ProtectionGuard material to provide abrasion resistance.

Weatherproofing is provided by a laminated BMW climate membrane and, in my testing, this did a great job of keeping rain at bay. The main zip of the garment is protected by a very substantial double storm flap which is effective. The StreetGuard also comes with an excellent protective collar system that consists of two collars. One, called the storm collar, is removable and contains an superb hood that'll stop rain from seeping in through the neck, while the other is luxuriously soft against the skin, with no chafe points.

Inside, you get a removable thermal liner which is made of a Thinsulate fill to keep you warm. While my usual stance on manufacturer-provided thermal linings is to kick 'em to the curb and replace them with a warmer offering, this one is of very good quality. It's attractive enough to be worn by itself when you're off the bike, and when worn with the jacket it offers exceptional comfort, particularly where the stretchy cuffs are concerned. While I rate the liner highly, it is not the warmest, so if you're planning on riding regularly in the depth of winter, you might want to make sure you swap it out for

something more substantial.

For storage, you get two delightfully-lined handwarmer pockets (which are protected by water-resistant zips), two zipped internal chest pockets, and an internal pouch that'll fit a phone. Ventilation is where the StreetGuard has its limitations. You get two large pit zips paired with exhaust vents, which are better than nothing, but if you're going to be heading out on a baking summer's day, you'll get very warm.

THE TROUSERS

The StreetGuard trousers are amongst the best I've worn. They're supremely comfortable and the included removable bib and adjustable bracers help provide an incredible level of weather protection. You'll love the secure fit it provides. The bib can, of course, be removed when weather conditions allow, leaving you with standard riding trousers.

Protection is provided by removable CE level 2 BMW NP2 protectors on the knees and hips and, like in the jacket, they're all-day comfortable. High-wear areas are also reinforced with ProtectionGuard.

The thermal liner provides a good amount of warmth and great comfort, and you get two well-sized hip pockets which are closable with water-resistant zips. I would have liked more storage options here and the trousers could do with more venting options.

CONCLUSION

All in all, the BMW StreetGuard suit is a superb four-season riding suit. It performs excellently in bad weather, is comfortable to wear, and offers high levels of protection.

IN A LINE: A superb riding suit with subtle BMW branding. If you have the money, you'll love it.

DUCATI STRADA C4

JACKET - £699, TROUSERS - £429

WWW.DUCATI.COM





ome riders like to wear the love of their particular choice of motorcycle brand literally on their sleeve, which is why plenty of manufacturers sell branded textile jackets and trousers as part of their product line. In Ducati's case, the Italian manufacturer has teamed up with one of the world's leading motorcycle clothing brands Dainese to produce the Strada C4 riding suit.

THE JACKET

This all-weather jacket features relatively subtle Ducati branding on the front in the form of logos on the chest and right shoulder. These are complimented by a bolder use of the word Ducati written across the back of the jacket. It's likely no coincidence that the colour scheme echoes the grey, black and red paint scheme on the Multistrada 950.

Putting the Strada C4 on for the first time felt a little like slipping on cosy pyjamas. It is extremely comfortable and feels soft and flexible in the saddle. However, the Strada C4 also features Duratex and Mugello fabrics, which have been reinforced in high-risk impact areas such as the shoulders, arms and knees. Further protection comes in the form of CE-Level 1 armour in the shoulders and elbows, although you'll need to buy a back protector separately. It seems crazy to me that a jacket with a near £700 price tag doesn't come with a back protector.

The Strada C4 uses a three-layer set up that's more often found on less expensive garments. In this system, you are kept dry by a removeable Gore-Tex waterproof liner worn under the jacket. While this approach does keep you dry, the outer jacket and trousers soon become saturated with water and, combined with wind chill, make you feel cold quickly.

As you would expect from a garment made by Dainese, the Strada C4 is made to a high standard, with neatly-finished seams, stitches and joins. Zips on the pockets and vents are either water resistant or feature storm flaps,

and I especially liked the removable inner thermal liner, which features a PrimaLoft fill, and doubles as a casual jacket I'd be happy to wear off the bike.

When it comes to riding in warmer weather, the Strada C4 benefits from a Nanofeel lining with antibacterial properties to help keep you smelling sweet. There are vents at the chest and arms as well as exhausts at the back of the jacket. Take the waterproof lining out and you've got a light and airy jacket.

There are two good-sized pockets on the front of the jacket, along with two pockets at the chest and an ample map pouch.

The jacket is a good length around the waist and sleeves, covering my back when I'm sat in the saddle and my wrists when I reach for the handlebars.

THE TROUSERS

The Strada C4 trousers are made from the same abrasion resistant material as the jacket and have armour positioned at the hips and knees. Warmth is provided by a removable thermal lining and waterproofing comes in the form of a non-removable Gore-tex drop liner. Again, this led to the outer material of the trousers and jacket getting saturated and cold when I rode in the rain, particularly in the crotch area.

In the dry, the Strada C4 trousers proved just as comfortable as the jacket, feeling soft and flexible. The fit was comfortable and unrestrictive and there are also two pockets on the trousers which don't have a zip.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the Strada C4 is a stylish and comfortable jacket and trousers combo that does a solid job. If it was a few hundred pounds cheaper, it would represent very good value for money, but at almost £700 for the jacket alone, the Strada C4's premium price tag doesn't match its performance or features.

IN A LINE: A good mid-range suit at a premium price.

ALPINESTARS BIG SUR

JACKET - **£899.99**, TROUSERS - **£599.99**

WWW.ALPINESTARS.CO.UK



t £1,499 for the jacket and trousers combo, the Alpinestars Big Sur is the most expensive suit in this group test by quite some margin. Throw in the airbag technology that the jacket's been built to support, and you're up to a staggering £2,500. For this sort of money you'd be right to expect perfection, and while the Big Sur does have a few niggles, it's certainly a very good suit.

THE JACKET

The Big Sur comes Tech-Air Airbag system-ready, so it's got all of the connection points, switches and LED lighting that's needed to use the technology seamlessly. I tried the jacket without the Tech-Air, but having used the system in the past, I would recommend it if you can put up with the added weight and bulk that comes with it.

That being said, the Big Sur is a big 'ol bulky jacket by itself. Slip your arms into this and it feels like you're suiting up in plate armour. CE level 2 inserts on the shoulders and arms provide impact resistance while there are also TPU inserts on the shoulders and Armacor reinforcements on areas likely to see abrasion. The jacket itself feels stiff and rigid, adding to that protective feel, but this comes at a cost to comfort and wearability.

The Big Sur jacket is so bulky that moving around becomes difficult, to the point where raising my arms and performing life saver checks was an effort. The cut is also quite restrictive, particularly around the chest and shoulders, so if you're broad you'll find the Italian cut a bit off-putting. That said, after nearly 1,000 miles of riding, the suit has started to loosen up a bit, to the point where it's becoming more comfortable with every ride.

Waterproofing is provided by a laminated Gore-Tex Pro membrane that provides genuine all-over waterproofing. To keep you warm, you get a removable thermal liner that's warm enough for most uses, though extended rides in the cold will need to be supplemented by an extra insulated layer.

In terms of storage you get two huge handwarmer pockets, two zipped chest pockets and two nicely-sized internal pouches. The two main pockets are marketed as waterproof, but take it from my soggy wallet that they're not. You also get a large pocket on the rear. Ventilation comes in the form of two large chest vents that are coupled with rear exhaust vents. They're not the most effective and in the summer this jacket will get very warm.

THE TROUSERS

Like the Big Sur jacket, the trousers feel substantial and protective, but also quite restrictive in their fit. They do loosen up with wear and the accordion stretch inserts on the knees do go some way to combating the restrictive fit.

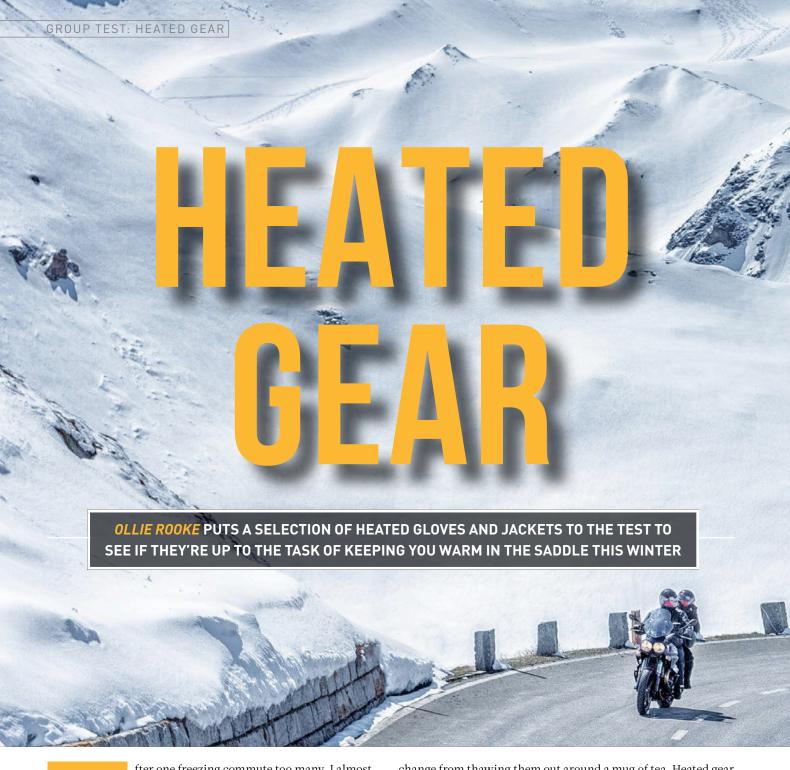
They're fully waterproof thanks to the Gore-Tex Pro membrane, and the removable insulated lining is plenty warm enough for cold weather riding. Ventilation is decent, with the two large, zipped vents running across the top of the thigh to allow good air intake, and you get a good amount of storage from the hip pockets and the single cargo-style pocket on the left thigh.

Protection comes from CE level 2 knee armour, though you'll need to spend extra to get the hip inserts, which is a bit of a shame when the trousers cost £599.99. The trousers also come with useful bracers that'll help pull them up to provide weather protection.

CONCLUSION

The Big Sur suit is an expensive piece of kit that provides exceptional weather protection. It's the jacket and trousers that I wore on our Three Pubs Challenge, which saw us ride for 16 hours through almost nonstop rain. It was cold, wet, and it would have been pretty miserable if I was in a less-good suit.

IN A LINE: Top-tier weather protection that comes at a high price.



fter one freezing commute too many, I almost admitted defeat. Moving to the Midlands from London, where a bike and public transport had never failed me, my car-free status was becoming seriously under threat. The Auto Trader website was open on my computer and my internet tabs were filled with tired, but warm-looking hatchbacks for sale in

the local area.

as I possibly could.

Winter riding was getting the better of me. Even with the warmest of gear, there are few places to hide from the elements on a motorbike and, at motorway speeds, wind chill can make a winter morning in Warwickshire feel like a blast through Siberia. But then, the next morning salvation arrived in the form of a pair of heated gloves, passed to me by *ABR* Assistant Editor James, to review for this issue. They were a revelation and the next day I offered, well insisted, to review as much heated gear

And it's not just that heated gear makes your ride more pleasant, although a warm cocoon around your fingers is a glorious

change from thawing them out around a mug of tea. Heated gear makes riding safer. When you're cold your body works overtime to warm you up. Shivering can burn 400 calories an hour, causing fatigue and impacting your ability to concentrate.

This isn't pleasant when you're walking or stood outside, but on a bike, it can have a much graver impact. You become more likely to skip those little checks – the lifesaver, the glance in your mirror, that final check before pulling out. It doesn't make you a bad rider, but when you're pushing your body to the limit, something will eventually give.

Using heated gear will not only solve this issue, but also means you do away with the bulky extra layers usually associated with winter riding. Added bulk reduces your flexibility in the saddle and thick gloves can reduce your ability to use the controls. This all adds up to slower reaction times which is never a good thing on a motorcycle.

But before you rush out to pick a heated jacket and gloves, what should you be looking out for? The first, and most important thing, is to buy clothing that fulfils the primary aims of all



motorcycling gear. Heated gloves, for example, must be safe enough to protect you in a crash if worn externally, comfortable enough to use while riding and, warm and waterproof even without the heating element turned on.

The location of the heating element is also a key consideration, this is where the wiring that provides the all-important warmth is located. Taking gloves as an example again, having a heating element on the palm and back of the hand, will be more effective than using a glove that only warms the back of your fingers.

You should also consider where the gear draws juice from. Direct wiring to the battery will keep you toasty all day in the saddle but involves some DIY installation and will draw power from a battery that may already be wired up to heated grips, a SatNav and USB charger. Battery-powered gear may be an easier option, but your batteries may well run out before the end of a journey and storing the bulky batteries within the gear can make it feel uncomfortable.

Also, take a close look at the controller used to adjust the

temperature. Ideally, it will have at least low, high and medium settings so you can avoid overheating on milder days, as well as helping you prolong battery life. It should also be easy to cycle through those settings while wearing thick winter gloves so you don't end up taking your eyes off the road to fiddle around with a controller.

Heated gear also tends to carry a weighty price tag and can be a serious investment for those looking to carry on riding through winter. A brand's history and pedigree in the market can therefore come into consideration, as can build quality, warranty and a returns policy.

HOW WE'RE JUDGING

All gear designed for motorcyclists must fulfil the basic function of allowing us to ride our motorcycle as safely and as comfortably as possible. An item's rating will not only take into account its ability to keep you warm while riding in cold weather, but also value for money, comfort, ease of use and protection (if relevant).

GERBING XR HEATED MOTORCYCLE GLOVES

£169.99

WWW.GERBING.COM

s the heated gear market evolves established brands, such as Gerbing, have stayed ahead of the game by improving the versatility of their offerings. Designed to be worn alone or alongside one of Gerbing's heated jacket liners, the XR gloves are no exception to this rule.

The first time you pick up the glove, you'd be forgiven thinking it's a 'normal' bike glove, and the beauty is that you'll find yourself using it even as the temperatures rise. The leather outer keeps the glove supple and provides a tactile feel with your motorcycle's controls, while the Hypora membrane keeps the glove waterproof when the rain starts to fall. A palm slider and armoured knuckles should protect your hands in the event of crash. The power connection is also subtle and hidden on the side of the cuff, and the control button is similarly understated. To the casual observer the XRs simply look like a nice pair of leather motorcycle gloves.

The XR avoids the issues other heated gloves have with bulky batteries as they're designed to be wired directly to your motorcycle's battery, or a Gerbing jacket liner. Ideal in theory, but in practice this can throw up some issues. When worn underneath your jacket, as you would want to in the rain, the temperature control button is covered and inaccessible. It is also seriously fiddly to get yourself wired in, adding a few minutes to your ride preparation. Despite this, they're a great companion to other Gerbing gear, and best much of the competition.

IN A LINE: Comfortable, well-made heated leather gloves that you'll want to keep wearing into Spring.



TUCANO URBANO HANDWARM GLOVES

£169.99

WWW.TUCANOURBANO.COM

ucano Urbano is an Italian brand known for its stylish range of products targeted at scooter riders and commuters. The Handwarm glove is no departure from this trend. An understated, all-black polyester/polyurethane waterproof outer with a polyester inner makes for a subtle and comfortable glove, with a warmth provided by heating elements in the palm and fingers.

Stripped back simplicity lies at the heart of what makes this glove an attractive prospect. The waterproof outer keeps you dry, and the heating elements are lovely when gripping your handlebars. The on/off button is large, easy to use on the go and the glove itself is very comfortable on, in fact it hardly feels like a motorcycle glove at all.

But this also proves to be its undoing. The button is overly sensitive and not well-lit, I found myself regularly knocking it off without noticing. The glove also only provides one heating setting with no option to wire them into your bike, has a short battery life of around two hours and comes with a distinct lack of protection, except for reinforced padding at the knuckle and palm, and is, with this in mind, only really suitable for short commutes around town.

The Handwarm is a glove you could easily wear on a morning dog walk, before hopping on your bike and heading into the office. But with limited protection, there are better options at this price point.

IN A LINE: Provides warmth and comfort, but lacks protective features of a motorcycle glove.



RST PARAGON THERMOTECH

£189.99

WWW.RST-MOTO.COM

ST is a British company with a history in racing who have built a reputation for producing reasonably priced and versatile riding gear. However, the Paragon Thermotech gloves, priced at £189.99 certainly aren't cheap, coming in at the top end of RST's glove range. With a leather construction, touch-screen compatible fingers and a waterproof lining, they looked to be the ideal glove to keep my hands toasty as the temperatures dropped on my daily 30-mile commute.

The gloves slip on easily and provide a tactile connection with my bike's controls. The knuckle armour and reinforced sections on the fingers and palm give them a solid feel and should protect your hands in the event of spill. The glove has a thinsulate inner liner which feels soft to the touch and makes them fairly warm even without the heating element switch on. Unfortunately, I found this out when the battery died during my commute. The guoted battery life is four hours, but during real world use on bitterly cold winter mornings the hottest setting drained the battery in around two hours.

The battery pack is located in an over-sized wrist cuff which didn't fit under my jacket. This means that when it rains, water will run down your arm and into the glove. The warmth from the heating element concentrated on the back of my hands, mostly around the fingers, although I did find they lifted off my hand when I gripped the handlebars, lessening the heating effect.

When it's dry, and the heat is turned up to full power, The RST Paragon performs well, but with the price in mind there are a few too many flaws for my liking.

IN A LINE: A comfortable winter glove let down by battery and comfort issues.



KEIS G601 PREMIUM HEATED TOURING GLOVES

WWW.KEISAPPAREL.CO.UK

well-known name in the heated gear market, Keis is a British brand which has built a reputation for providing an excellent range of heated motorcycle gear over the last few years. After a few colder mornings pushed some other gloves to their limits, it felt right to put the premium-priced G601 under the microscope. For testing I wore the gloves with the optional battery packs for ease of use, though ABR editor, Bryn, wears them wired in to the bike and swears by them.

Though the price may look a bit steep, when slipping on the gloves for the first time you'll realise that you really do get what you pay for. A leather construction with comfort panels ensure you don't lose any feeling from the bike's controls, and a palm slider and armoured knuckle provides the protection you'd expect from a 'proper' motorcycling glove.

The snug design keeps the heating elements, located on top of the palm and around the fingers, flush to your skin. The Thinsulate and Hipora membrane helps to keep the heat in and your hand dry, making these gloves warm to wear even when the battery runs out. The heat controller on the back of the wrist is easy to operate and gives you three effective heating settings, while the red/green/yellow lighting system is easy to read.

I'd highly recommend Keis' G601 as a winter glove, even if it didn't have the heating element. However, add the extra warmth from their heating ability and you have a superb glove to keep you riding through the winter months. I would opt for wiring them into my bike's battery instead of using the rather bulky and expensive battery packs fitted inside the glove.

IN A LINE: An excellent heated glove with options to cover short or long distances in comfort.



BLAZEWEAR HEATED MOTORCYCLE JACKET LINER

£169.99

WWW.BLAZEWEAR.COM

lazewear is a British company which specialises in providing heated clothing targeted at people taking part in a range of activities. It has entered the motorcycle market with its Moto Range, a collection of standalone or connectable heated mid-layers to keep your entire body warm. I was interested to see how they fared tackling a market dominated by seasoned manufacturers. The Heated Motorcycle Jacket Liner offers full upper body heated coverage, with two elements in the chest, back, sleeves and collar.

The jacket is soft to the touch and doesn't add much bulk underneath your usual riding jacket. When it's switched on, you have a choice of three heating options to keep you snug.

You will have to install the wiring harness to your motorcycle battery before setting off, but once done, you're guaranteed all-day warmth. The controller is easy to use and allows you to switch between settings easily while riding.

The inclusion of a high collar and long sleeves, complete with their own heating elements, makes this an excellent heated under layer at a competitive price.



IN A LINE: A reasonably priced jacket offering fantastic heated coverage.

BMW MOTORRAD HEATUP BODYWARMER VEST

£185

WWW.BMW-MOTORRAD.CO.UK

household name in the adventure motorcycle market, the German manufacturer's newest gear range is targeted at those looking for a hassle-free way to keep warm during winter. The lightweight, zip-up vest connects to the auxiliary power socket on your BMW motorcycle for ease of use. Simply plug and

With the socket already fitted to my bike, the power hook-up required no installation and the vest kept me warm throughout longer rides. The socket can also be connected to other battery wiring harnesses meaning you don't have to own a BMW to use it.

The controller, sold separately and somewhat steeply for £45, enables you to choose from one of three heat settings using the large coloured button with a red, green, yellow system for ease of use even in sunlight. Without this the vest still works, albeit only at the hottest setting.

BMW's HeatUp vest doesn't stray far from the high standards of the manufacturer's usual offerings. For a premium price you get something that works well, is reliable and has comfort in mind. The vest is lightweight when worn and hardly noticeable, that is until you plug it in and feel the heating elements at the chest, back and kidneys kick in.

ABR RATING
8/10

COMFORT
EASE OF USE
WARMTH
WALUE FOR MONEY
7

IN A LINE: A premium heated vest that is easy to use and will keep you warm all day.









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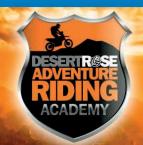
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GERBING HEATED PREMIUM JACKET LINER

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WWW.GERBING.COM

leading name in the world of heated motorcycle gear,
Gerbing has long been the benchmark for competitors
looking to keep riders warm during winter. The superb
Gerbing Heated Premium Jacket Liner continues this tradition.

On first impression, you'd be forgiven for thinking this isn't just a liner but a bona fide jacket in it's own right. In comparison to other heated uppers we've looked at, this has a much more substantial feel and works well as your main thermal layer even without the heating elements pumping out warmth. With the heat turned on it's a dream, and keeps you warm from the top of your neck to the ends of your arms.

It also looks pretty good too, and I'd have no qualms about keeping it on while walking around town off the bike. The temperature controller, sold separately for £49.99, is easy to use in direct sunlight with the help of the well lit display and gives you a five temperature options to choose from. The cabling for the controller is a little long though with there being plenty of dangling wire. Without the controller the jacket will still work, but only at full power, which is uncomfortably hot in all but freezing temperatures or high speeds. The additional cost for the controller keeps the jacket from achieving that perfect ten score.

ABR RATING
9/10

COMFORT
EASE OF USE
WARMTH
10

IN A LINE: A fantastic two-in-one. You get a heated layer that can double up as your go to thermal liner with the power off.

KEIS J501 PREMIUM HEATED JACKET

£199.99

WWW.KEIS-APPAREL.CO.UK

VALUE FOR MONEY

direct competitor to Gerbing for the overall top spot in the heated motorcycle gear market, in this group review the two brands go head-to-head in the heated jacket category. So how does Keis' J501 Premium Heated Jacket compare to Gerbing's Heated Premium Jacket Liner?

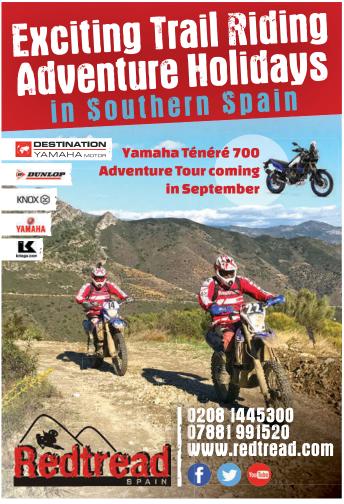
When wired in, the heat controller (which is included with the jacket at no extra cost, well done Keis) gives you the choice of three temperature settings. Unfortunately, the controller is pretty small, while the lights indicating which setting you're on are tiny and can be difficult to make out, even in the dark. To make matters worse, while wearing motorcycle gloves it's tough to the feel the button that allows you to cycle through the temperature settings, meaning it can quickly turn into a guessing game from the saddle.

For a 'premium' piece of clothing, Keis' Heated Jacket also feels just a bit too much like another piece of motorcycle gear. Sure, it's slim and lightweight while on, giving you plenty of flexibility on the bike. The wrist cuffs and high collar also do a great job of sealing in heat around your torso. But it's not soft to the touch in the same way that the Gerbing is and doesn't feel quite so comfortable on. For an established brand, and bearing in mind the quality of the Keis gloves that were the clear winners in their own category, I have to say I was hoping for a fantastic jacket, rather than just a good one.

IN A LINE: With the temperature controller thrown in it's great value for money, but is narrowly beaten by its close competitor.

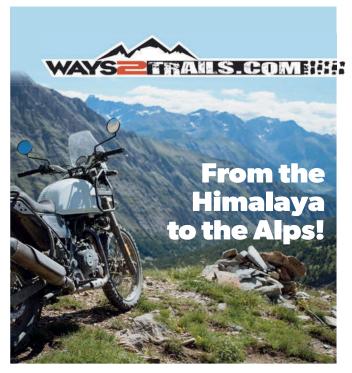












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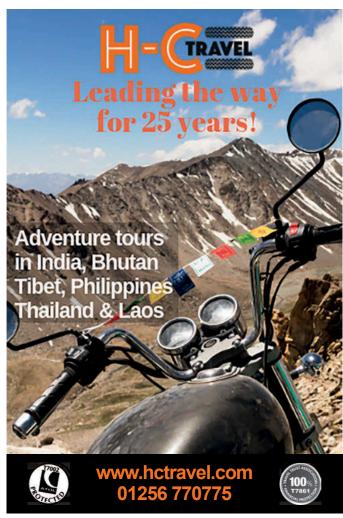
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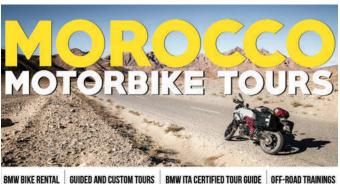
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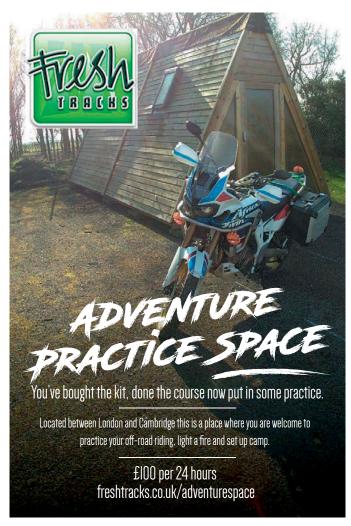








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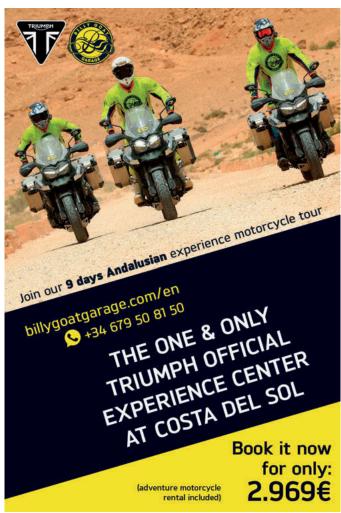








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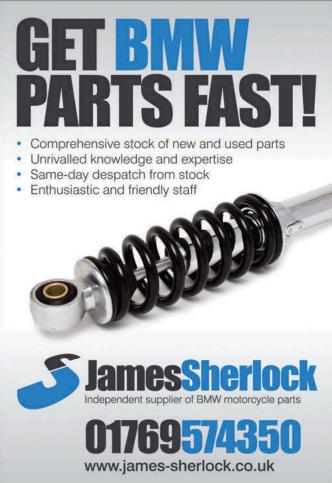


















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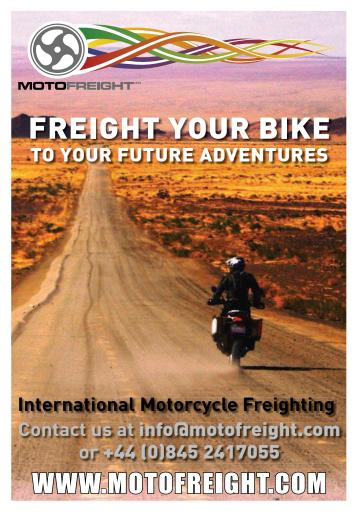












READERS EXPOSED

NAME: PHIL GORDON AGE: 49 OCCUPATION: TEACHER



■ FIRST BIKE?

Honda CBR600F, brand new after passing my direct access test. I used it for holidays, camping and track days.

CURRENT BIKE?

KTM 990 Adventure. It has been 36,000 miles of pure fun.

■ DREAM BIKE?

There's a rumour that BMW are bringing out an "M" range of its bikes. Now that would be worth a look at.

■ MOST EXPENSIVE MOTORCYCLE ACCESSORY YOU'VE EVER BOUGHT?

Klim Badlands Pro jacket and trousers.

■ MOUNTAIN PASSES OR DESERT PISTES?

Mountain passes. My favourites include the Tremalzo Pass, the Grossglockner, the Gardena Pass, Baralacha Pass, and the Amalfi Coast road.

■ TENT OR HOTEL?

I like to mix the rough of the road with the luxuries of a hotel, shower and beer.

■ LIFELONG AMBITION?

Retire early and ride as many countries as possible to get more pins in the wall map.

■ MOST DANGEROUS MOTORCYCLING MOMENT?

Breaking my shoulder bone after a front wheel slide on a solo trip through Europe.

■ MOST MEMORABLE MOTORCYCLING MOMENT?

I've got a few. Topping out with a bratwurst on the Stelvio Pass, completing the mountain mile at hair raising speeds on the Isle of Man, and doing my first solo trip around Austria and Slovenia.

■ WHAT DO YOU MISS MOST WHEN TRAVELLING?

My good lady Fiona, although I'm working on her to join me on a trip as pillion rider.

■ IF YOU COULD MEET ANY PERSON, DEAD OR ALIVE, AND ASK THEM ONE QUESTION, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Barry Sheene. I had a poster of him on my wall as a boy. I'd ask who would win in a race between him and Rossi?

■ FAVOURITE CRAP JOKE?

I used to date a girl with a lazy eye, turns out she was seeing someone else the whole time.

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