

A ADVENTURE BIKE RIDER

ISSUE 59: SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2020 £6.99

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EUROPE

TOUR NORWAY

UK ADVENTURES

ABR WELSH SUPER 10 CHALLENGE

BMW S 1000 XR

RIDDEN, TESTED AND REVIEWED

£6.99 ISSUE 59 SEP | OCT 2020



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59>

PLUS: CASUAL RIDING BOOTS RATED & NEW GREEN LANE ROUTES

4 | Ever

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* 4Ever Multistrada is valid for all Multistrada models from Model Year 2020 on. 4Ever Multistrada is available on bikes with a date of warranty activation starting on 1st November 2019.

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£145.00 per month
Plus deposit and optional final repayment

† Included in Optional
Final Repayment.

Cash Price	£14,141.00	36 Monthly Repayments of	£145.00
Deposit	£3,451.90	Optional Final Repayment	£7,512.00
Total Amount of Credit	£10,689.10	Total Amount Payable	£16,183.90
Agreement Duration	37 Months	Interest Rate (Fixed)	7.22%
Purchase Fee†	£10.00	Representative APR	7.5% APR

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Credit is subject to status and is only available to UK residents aged 18 and over. This finance offer is only available through Ducati Finance which is a trading style of Black Horse Ltd, St. William House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff CF10 5BH. Finance offer ends 30th September 2020. The Cash Price shown above includes 1st registration fee and road fund licence. With TriOptions Personal Contract Purchase (PCP) you have the option after you have paid all of the regular monthly repayments to: (1) Return the motorcycle and not pay the Optional Final Repayment. In this example if the motorcycle has exceeded 15,417 miles, a charge of 7.2p (including VAT at 20%) will apply per excess mile. If the motorcycle is in good condition (fair wear and tear accepted) and has not exceeded 15,417 miles you will have nothing further to pay. (2) Pay the Optional Final Repayment to own the motorcycle or (3) Part exchange the motorcycle subject to settlement of your existing finance agreement; new finance agreements are subject to status. Figures are correct at time of print and can be subject to change.

TRIOPTIONS
PERSONAL CONTRACT PURCHASE



FROM THE FOUNDER: 10 YEARS OF ABR

There's a rough stone wall running along the edge of a deceptively high limestone cliff in the Ardennes region of Belgium. It's the sort of ancient dry-stone barrier that would not look out of place on the wild fells of the Lake District or the precipitous mountains of Snowdonia.

Over the past decade I've parked up at that wall three times, though it's the first occasion that has significance here. I was a heavy smoker 10 years ago (18 months smoke free now) and I'd just finished rolling a slim tab of Drum sitting atop the wall. As I took the first drag, I vividly recall hearing my phone ping with an automated text message that read, 'you have a subscription'.

By the time I'd finished the tab there had been two more identical messages and when I pulled into a petrol station in Luxembourg a couple of hours later there had been another 20. I could not contain the smile on my face or restrain the air punch or 'yes!' that came out loud enough to cause fellow motorists to turn and wonder.

You see, what had happened was the first issue of *Adventure Bike Rider* (ABR) magazine had launched in newsagents that very morning and those texts were telling me that my dream job may last a little longer, and that maybe there would be an issue two.

Well, here we are 10 years on and despite all the intervening chaos of digital disruption and viral lockdown, *Adventure Bike Rider* is alive, successful, and far more than just a printed magazine.

ABR has grown into a huge passionate community of like-minded riders with a love of motorcycles and a burning desire to travel and explore. Through our website, social media, digital and printed magazine and the ABR Festival at Ragley Hall it's been our prime mission to inspire you to make your motorcycle travel dreams a reality whether at home and abroad. And if feedback is any judge, then we appear to be successful in doing so.

In issue one, 10 years ago, I wrote the following... 'it doesn't matter what bike you ride or where you travel, if you think you're on an adventure then you are'. It's always been my view that life's adventures take place in that space between your ears, they just feel much more pleasurable when sat astride a motorcycle.

Many, many thanks for all your support over the past decade and here's to another 10 years of travel on two wheels.

Enjoy the magazine and hopefully catch you at the ABR Festival in 2021.

Alun

ABR WANTS YOU

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.



JOIN US ONLINE:

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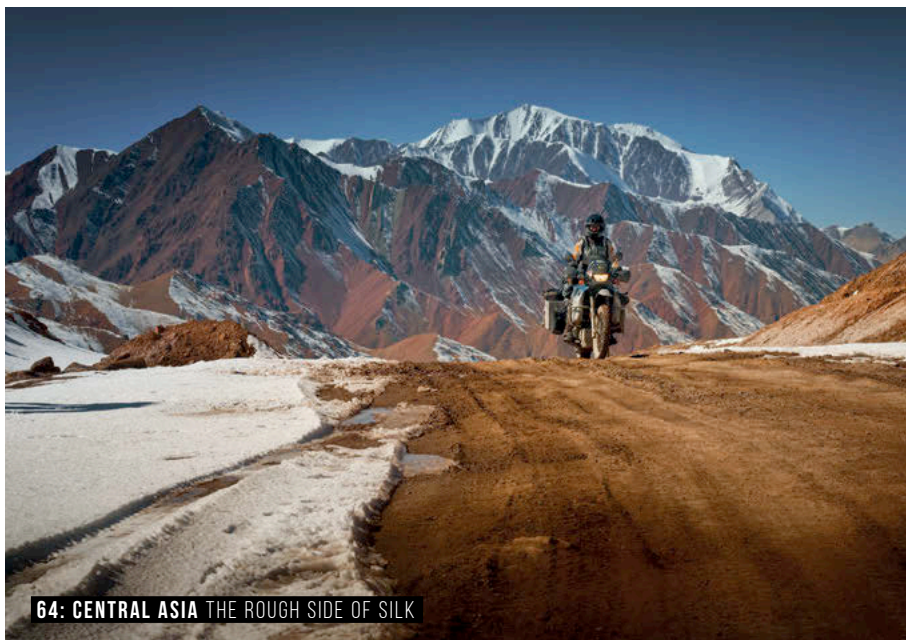
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THE PINNACLE OF EXPERIENCE

**Africa
Twin**



20YM CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN REPRESENTATIVE FINANCE EXAMPLE*

On the Road Price (cash price)	£13,049.00
Deposit	£2,768.43
Deposit Contribution**	£1,000.00
Amount of Credit	£9,280.57
36 Monthly Payments (duration 37 months)	£129.00
Final Payment†	£5,988.50
Total Amount Payable	£14,400.93
Representative APR	5.9%
Annual Contracted Mileage	4,000
Excess Mileage Charge	£0.06
Fixed Interest Rate p.a.	5.68%

5.9% APR
REPRESENTATIVE PCP
ON ALL 20YM CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN MODELS,
WITH UP TO £1,000 DEPOSIT CONTRIBUTION

HONED OFF-ROAD ABILITY FORGED IN COMPETITION.

Drawing heavily from decades of off-road experience with the CRF250R/450R race machines, the 2020 CRF1100L Africa Twin's **1100cc parallel twin power plant** is stronger all round and matched to a **lighter, sharper chassis** for superior off-road ability to open up terrain some only see in their most vivid dreams. Under its skin, the Africa Twin is smarter with **six riding modes, HSTC, Cornering ABS and Wheelie Control**, as well as full TFT touch screen display, Apple CarPlay®, Bluetooth connectivity and cruise control. Go everywhere – experience your one true adventure.

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[honda.co.uk](https://www.honda.co.uk)

0345 200 8000



PCP Terms & Conditions: *New retail CRF1100L Africa Twin ABS and DCT 20YM (excluding Adventure Sports and Electric Suspension variants) orders from 4 August 2020 to 30 November 2020 and registered by 30 November 2020. Subject to model and colour availability. Offers applicable at participating dealers and are at the promotor's absolute discretion (excluding Channel Islands). Representative example based on 3 years 5.9% PCP and £1,000 deposit contribution. **£1,000 Honda UK deposit contribution available. Excess mileage rate applies. †Final payment includes £10 option to purchase fee. You do not have to pay the Final Payment if you return the bike at the end of the agreement and you have paid all other amounts due, the bike is in good condition and has been serviced in accordance with the Honda service book and the maximum annual mileage of 4,000 has not been exceeded. Excess mileage rate applies should this be exceeded. At the end of the agreement, there are three options: i) Pay the optional final payment to own the vehicle, ii) Return the vehicle, or iii) Replace: Part exchange your Honda for a new one. Indemnities may be required in certain circumstances. Finance is only available to persons aged 18 or over, subject to status. All figures are correct at time of publication but may be subject to change. Honda Franchise Dealers are credit brokers, not lenders. Credit provided by Honda Finance Europe Plc. Cain Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1HL. Honda Financial Services is a trading name of Honda Finance Europe Plc. a company registered at Companies House No 03289418. Honda Finance Europe plc is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, Financial Services Register number 312541.

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THE MASTER OF ADVENTURE



Whether you're chasing the sunset across Europe or taking the long route home, the New V-Strom 1050 range is the perfect choice whatever your adventure. Its desert racer inspired looks grip you at a glance whilst a new, more powerful V-Twin engine and precise chassis deliver thrilling performance. Its comfortable and commanding riding position combined with advanced electronic rider aids truly make it the Master of Adventure. Every day. Everywhere.



£129 per Month (Plus deposit and optional final repayment) V-Strom 1050XT PCP Representative Example

CASH PRICE	DEPOSIT	TOTAL AMOUNT OF CREDIT	MONTHLY REPAYMENTS OF	OPTIONAL FINAL REPAYMENT
£11,447.00	£2,024.42	£9,422.58	£129.00	£6,165.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE	AGREEMENT DURATION	PURCHASE FEE*	INTEREST RATE (FIXED)	REPRESENTATIVE APR
£12,833.42	37 MONTHS	£10.00	5.71%	5.9% APR

*Included in optional final repayment

New V-Strom 1050 from just £10,147 and 1050XT from £11,447 on the road
Find out more or book a test ride at bikes.suzuki.co.uk

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REASON TO RIDE



GARDENA PASS, ITALY

During the making of issue one of *Adventure Bike Rider* back in 2010, Publisher and Founder Alun Davies travelled to the spectacular Dolomites mountain range in northern Italy for the first ever *ABR* travel feature.

In the resulting story, he described seeing 'huge, vertical, grey limestone cliffs rising thousands of metres out of lush Alpine meadows, slender towers of precipitous white rocks, and jagged skyline ridges looking for all the world like the turrets of a formidable fortress.' The roads were pretty special too.

One of the most impressive is the Gardena Pass (pictured) which contorts its way through the Dolomites for 13 exhilarating miles, rising to an elevation of 2,136m, as it connects the towns of Selva and Corvara. The road forms part of the Sella Ronda, a circular route that links four mountain passes: Passo Sella, Passo Pordoi, Passo Campolongo, and Passo Gardena. Trust us when we say it's an unforgettable ride and certainly one for your bucket list.





ATLANTIC ROAD, NORWAY

Ride Norway's iconic Atlantic Road and marvel at the raw power of nature

F

orged by giant retreating glaciers following a succession of ice ages, the fjords puncturing the rugged western coast of Norway are a vast and staggering reminder of the sheer power of nature. Crossing the mouth of one of them, the Atlantic Road is equally impressive,

a feat of engineering that affords stunning views of this otherworldly setting. A series of bridges rise and fall above the crashing waves of the Atlantic, linking a smattering of islands that are home to picturesque fishing villages. Use Norway's short summer nights to ride this late or early in the day to avoid traffic and have this road at the edge of the world all to yourself. **ABR**



WANT TO RIDE THIS?

The Atlantic Road is just one of the sensational roads you can ride in Norway with Motorrad Tours. The independent tour operator specialises in taking the hassle out of the planning and logistics of riding in some of the best motorcycle destinations on the planet, without restricting your freedom to ride and explore. You can ride the Atlantic Road and cross the Arctic Circle on Motorrad Tour's Arctic and the Midnight Sun Tour. To find out more visit www.motorrad-tours.com.

READERS ENGAGED

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

START THEM YOUNG



I was first lifted onto a motorbike by my dad at the age of seven. With a death grip on the bars and my skinny little legs wafting in the breeze, I was pushed down a local green lane to be caught at the other end by our local police sergeant.

My family were riders and my Grandad's daily run-around was a Brough Superior. Collectively they took a hand in teaching and encouraging me to ride. The love for bikes has never left me, I'm now 71 years old and it's safe to say I'm as much of a bike addict now as I was then.

Early in 2019, I travelled to New Zealand to surprise my sister, who I hadn't seen for over 40 years, on her 80th birthday. After a year planning the surprise with her family, I arrived in New Zealand with an additional five months set aside to ride around on a V-Strom 1000. To say that I was welcomed and treated like visiting royalty by everyone I met is a massive understatement. The experiences I had were unforgettable. As for the roads, well they must have been built by a crew of bikers. There's barely a straight or flat one to be found as they wriggle between snow-capped mountains, deep valleys, and vast gorges. I was in heaven.

On my eventual return I was hooked on adventure biking, having previously spent many years riding my 2000 plate Yamaha R1, and felt the hunger for more. I'd heard about the ABR Festival and booked two tickets, one each for myself and my friend Martin, who already has the adventure biking bug. Wow! What an outstanding event, and probably one of the best of its kind that I've attended. If something like that doesn't stir your soul, nothing will. I test rode a number of bikes while there and came away determined to buy myself a second bike, finally deciding on a Benelli TRK 502, which joined my garage as my first adventure bike.

We haven't stopped talking about it and re-booked as soon as we got home. To say we were gutted at the cancellation this year is an understatement, although of course it was the right decision. We can't wait for 2021. We'll be the ones sleeping in the ditch across from the entrance gates as you open.

I just wanted to welcome you and all your staff back and to wish you all many happy and enjoyable biking days in the future. I think you all do a great job. I just wish the magazine came out monthly!

On a final personal note congratulations on the birth of your first child (*ED – ABR Editor Bryn recently became a dad for the first time*). I'm the proud dad of two wonderful adults and grandad to two beautiful granddaughters. My advice is to get your children into bikes as soon as possible. My daughter has recently become the proud owner of her first bike, while my son-in-law rides a Harley (we forgive him for that and try not to mention it too often).

Good luck and ride safe,

KEN

AMAZING SCOTLAND

Great work on the latest issue. It inspired me to ride my new GS in Scotland after all of this Covid business, which sorted my head out after months of lockdown.

The Quiraing was awesome, I'd never heard of it until reading your piece (Amazing Britain: Scotland, Issue 58). I also got to ride the Pass of the Cattle for the second time, and this time is was dry. Bonus!

Thanks ABR, and keep up the good work.

MARK

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!

Send your letters to:

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

🐦 @ABRMAGAZINE

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📺 ADVENTURE _ BIKE _ RIDER



VERSATILITY REDEFINED. THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS



TigerSport

The Triumph Tiger Sport redefines the meaning of versatility by delivering athletic sporting prowess with thrilling riding characteristics and mile-munching touring with outstanding performance.

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A smooth, responsive, sporty 1050cc triple engine, rider-focused technology, and a chassis and suspension set-up for a dynamic yet incredibly comfortable ride all combine to deliver the best of all worlds.

Find out more, visit triumph.co.uk



FOR THE RIDE



HOT STUFF

Ollie Rooke rounds up the latest and greatest biking kit

SHARK SPARTAN GT CARBON

£409.99

www.nevis.uk.com

What is it? Shark's premium sports-touring helmet.

From the moment I picked up the Spartan GT Carbon, I could tell I was holding a high-quality lid in my hands. The sleek lines, aerodynamic features, and quality finish all combine in a helmet that has become a firm favourite in my riding wardrobe since it was delivered to the ABR offices a few months ago.

The quality feel continued as I slid my head into the snug interior, which is fully removable and washable. It's a helmet that provided all-day comfort as I wore it on long motorway blasts and I've no doubt it would perform well on tour. It also felt lightweight thanks to aerodynamic spoilers and foils that aided stability at speed, even when I carried out shoulder checks. The Spartan GT Carbon also features the French manufacturer's 'Shark Skin Technology', a rippled surface at the side of the helmet which aims to reduce wind buffeting and noise when you're riding, and it works a treat.

Two air inlets at the mouth and at the top of the head combine with two exhaust vents to ensure a constant flow of air through the helmet, while the Spartan GT Carbon also comes with an internal sun visor and a Pinlock insert in the box.

While it may not have the extra ventilation and larger field of vision I'd expect to see in an adventure helmet, if you stick to the tarmac, this would be an ideal road touring helmet to invest in.



ROBENS GOSHAWK 2EX TENT

£436

www.robens.de

What is it? A tunnel tent designed to provide ample living and storage space for adventurers on two wheels.

Never before had the phrase 'less is more' seemed further from the truth as I lay in my tiny one-person hiking tent with a Norwegian rainstorm raging outside. I shared my cramped living compartment with my sodden riding gear, while my roll bag and boots sat in a minuscule vestibule that was rapidly flooding as the rain grew stronger.

According to Danish tent manufacturer Robens, there are plenty of riders like me who go down the 'light is right' route and live to regret it. That's why Robens points motorcycle travellers embarking on bike adventures towards the larger Goshawk 2EX tent. Although larger than your typical hiking tent, with pack dimensions of 46cm by 22cm and a weight of 4.4kg, it is still easy to strap the tent to my bike when I head off on a trip.

It's also simple to erect as the tent pitches as one, meaning the inner and outer go up together. That outer shell also boasts a hydrostatic head of 5000mm to keep you dry in the rain. Inside is a vast front porch which would easily store two panniers and a roll-bag, and there is room for your gear and boots as well. The inner polyester living compartment can sleep two-people, and there's even a clothesline running along the underside of the tent's roof.

This all makes the Goshawk 2EX the ideal partner for motorcycle travellers who like to camp in comfort and who don't want to sleep packed like a sardine into a tiny tent.

READY TO RACE
» www.ktm.com

www.kiska.com

Please make no attempt to imitate the illustrated riding scenes, always wear protective clothing and observe the applicable provisions of the road traffic regulations!
The illustrated vehicles may vary in selected details from the production models and some illustrations feature optional equipment available at additional cost.

#GO ADVENTURE

2020 KTM 790 ADVENTURE R PCP FINANCE EXAMPLE

Term	36 months
Monthly payment	£89.00
Price	£10,999.00
Deposit	£2,686.00
Amount of credit	£8,313.00
Interest charges	£1,072.88

Optional final payment (GFV)	£6,181.88
Total amount payable	£12,071.88
Annual mileage	5,000
Excess mileage charge	14.9p per mile
Representative APR	4.9% APR
Fixed rate of interest	2.52% p.a.

ADVENTURE HARDER

Developed from KTM's offroad race DNA, the KTM 790 ADVENTURE R is a serious travel capable offroad motorcycle equipped for the most extreme escapes. With the hardcore adventurer in mind, it balances the power of a twin, with the lightness and agility of a single-cylinder offroad bike, to open up new riding possibilities. It offers an impressive fuel range without compromising agility, feeding a powerful yet compact, smooth and reliable engine. Access more extreme and distant offroad terrain thanks to easy-to-use rider aids and practical ergonomics. Now with £1,600 off SRP.

Finance example updated August 2020. Example includes £1,600 discount. Promotion available whilst stocks last. Available at participating authorised KTM dealers only. Finance subject to status. Deposit shown may be higher than the minimum; a lower deposit will result in increased monthly payments. Terms and conditions apply. At the end of the agreement there are three options: (i) Renew: Part exchange the vehicle (ii) Retain: Pay the Optional Final payment to own the vehicle; or (iii) Return the vehicle. Further charges may be made subject to the condition or mileage of the vehicle, if the vehicle is returned at the end of the finance agreement. Applicants must be 18 or over. Guarantees/Indemnities may be required. KTM Finance RH1 1SR.

KTM





ICON RAIDEN JACKET

£459.99

www.rideicon.com

What is it? Icon's rugged adventure jacket, ready to take on the world.

When it comes to buying a new motorcycle jacket that can stand up to the rigours of adventure biking, there are four things I look for. Firstly, I want an outer shell laminated with a waterproof membrane to keep the rain out. Secondly, there must be large vents to allow air to flow as I work up a sweat on green lanes. Thirdly, there needs to be plenty of protection, and fourthly, I need ample storage for all the essentials I keep in my pockets (including a packet of Jelly Babies).

Handily, American motorcycle clothing manufacturer Icon has produced a jacket that ticks all those boxes. Icon has made a name for itself as a manufacturer of rugged, quality, and eye-catching motorcycle gear, and it has delivered yet again with the Raiden. A laminated Supplex shell provides waterproofing and ample ventilation, including vast pit vents (which are a personal favourite), to keep you cool when the mercury rises. Cordura reinforced areas are designed to protect your skin in a slide, while armour at the elbows, shoulders, and back help the jacket achieve a lofty CE AA safety rating.

A nice touch is the small Saint Christopher (the patron saint of travellers) pendant fixed onto the inside of one of the many inner pockets. It highlights that the Raiden was made for those who like to travel. Even better is the £459.99 price tag that makes it a mid-priced jacket with a premium feel.

MOSKO MOTO WOODSMAN ENDURO PANTS

£270.15

www.moskomoto.com

What is it? Softshell trousers designed to keep adventure bikers cool and comfortable on the trails.

If you take your adventure bike off-road for any length of time, you'll soon find yourself working up a serious sweat and looking for something a little more comfortable than your typical adventure suit. That's where the Woodsman Enduro Pants come in.

Produced by American motorcycle accessories manufacturer Mosko Moto, the Woodsman are their go-to riding trousers for serious adventures. It has been designed to be comfortable enough to ride anywhere, whether you're scrambling up a rocky incline on the Trans Euro Trail, or ploughing through Moroccan sand dunes.

The trousers feel comfortable when worn thanks to their lightweight nylon construction, which is reinforced at the knees and seat with a Schoeller waterproof material. Neat gripper patches on the inner leg give you more control when you grip the tank with your knees while stood up on the pegs, and when it comes to airflow, four vast vents on the thighs provide direct ventilation to keep overheating at bay. Mosko Moto has also packed the Woodsman with plenty of storage, including two giant cargo pockets on the front of the thighs.

For those of you looking to disappear into the wilderness on your next tour, the Woodsman's lightweight design and comfort, particularly in warmer weather, would make them a cooling accompaniment on an extended trail ride.



LEAVE NOTHING BEHIND

VERSYS
1000

Ninja
H2 SX

FREE PANNIERS WORTH UP TO £890

Realise the full potential of your Kawasaki Tourer with complimentary panniers and interior bags available on the Versys 1000 and Ninja H2 SX ranges until 30th September 2020.

Whether you prefer sport touring performance or a more upright seating position for your adventures, Kawasaki has the model to suit your needs. The increased carrying capacity is worth up to £890.70 for the Versys 1000 and up to £867.70 with the Ninja H2 SX. Take your adventure further with more luggage and revel in the exhilarating rush from your Kawasaki tourer.

To find out more contact your local Kawasaki dealer or visit WWW.KAWASAKI.CO.UK

Complimentary panniers available on 19/20MY Versys 1000, Versys 1000 SE, Ninja H2 SX, Ninja H2 SX SE and Ninja H2 SX SE+ and Ninja H2 SX SE. Offer available for models registered to customers between 01/08/2020 and 30/09/2020.

Kawasaki

LAST CHANCE TO SAVE £30**WITH AN EARLY BIRD TICKET: £99 £69!
GET YOURS TODAY**

SO, YOU'RE NOT COMING TO THE ABR FESTIVAL?

That's fine, we understand, and it's probably for one of these reasons, right?

You don't have anyone to come with

I get it. Going to events by yourself can seem both intimidating and pointless. I mean, what will you do? Sit in your tent staring at the fly sheet flapping in the summer breeze?

That might be true of a lot of festivals and social gatherings, but the ABR Festival is different, we're making this the friendliest bike festival around. Of course, I would say that, but I've spoken to plenty of guys and girls who told me that they came to the festival alone and left with a new group of riding pals. In fact, I've been told by more than one person that they've been touring overseas with new friendship groups that were made at the 2019 event.

You don't ride an adventure bike

It would be silly to turn up to an event called the Adventure Bike Rider Festival on anything other than an adventure bike, right? You'll stick out like the only kid who went to the party in fancy dress.

I'll be blunt here... don't be so silly! Contrary to the name of the festival and indeed the name of the magazine you're reading right now, we believe that an adventure bike is truly any bike.

When you get a chance, check out the photo gallery on the ABR website from the 2019 festival and look at some of the different kinds of bikes that people were riding. From C90s to FJR's and everything in between, we pride ourselves on the inclusive nature of the Adventure Bike Rider Festival.

Bike festivals aren't your thing

Whether it's the events that resemble glorified carboot sales or the booze-filled, leather-clad mud fests that have come to represent 'typical' motorcycle festivals, they're not for you. You value quality. You want the good craic but also a good night's sleep.

Don't worry, we hear you, and that's why

we're pulling out all of the stops to make the ABR Festival as fun-filled, interactive, and comfortable as possible. What do I mean by that? Well, we believe that a bike festival should be about encouraging you to ride, not dig deeper into your pockets once you're through the gates. Most of the attractions at the ABR Festival will be free of charge, and we're investing a lot of money in posh, clean loos and warm showers.

Camping is included with weekend tickets, but there's even the option of upgrading to glamping tipis if you don't want the hassle of pitching your own tent and sleeping on a self-inflating mat.

If camping ain't your thing, then you'll be glad to know that there are literally hundreds of accommodation options within 15 miles of the venue the popular tourist town of Stratford upon Avon is just down the road.

You can't/don't ride off road

You've seen the festival advertised before. All you read about is the AX41 Adventure Trail and the green lane rideouts, but the organisers don't get it... you don't ride off road!

A common misconception is that the ABR Festival is for off-road riders only. That view couldn't be further from the truth. While we pride ourselves on our on-site facilities for those who want to stray from the tarmac, there's plenty to do for road-going adventurers.

Whether that's guided rideouts in the Cotswolds, advanced rider training, or test rides of the latest touring and adventure bikes, you'll find it hard to fit everything into just one weekend.

Not only that, but there's so much to do when you're off the bike that you don't even have to do any riding once you're here if you don't want to.

Put simply, it doesn't matter that you can't or don't ride off-road!

You're intimidated because you're not a great rider

Everyone's going to be a better rider than you and you don't want to embarrass yourself or be out of your depth. You'd rather stay at home than put yourself in that situation.

This is a totally reasonable fear to have. We've probably all experienced something similar at some point in our lives. For me, I used to not want to go to football because I thought I'd be judged for being crap. That fear was completely unfounded and as soon as I got there I was having great fun (I even won the 'Mr Personality' award that they give to the kids who are rubbish).

No one will make you ride out of your comfort zone at the ABR Festival. The Adventure Trail will have beginner and big-bike friendly sections, and we'll also have riding school and experts on-site who'll be more than happy to teach you what they know.

Bike festivals are boy's clubs for blokes only

Motorcycling is a male-dominated hobby, there's no doubt about that, and bike festivals represent that in the fact that the overwhelming majority of visitors are men. All of the events and attractions that are put on are aimed at blokes too, and the toilets aren't somewhere you'd want to have a 'sit down' wee in.

In-line with what I've already mentioned, we pride ourselves on the fact that the ABR Festival is the friendliest and most inclusive motorcycle festival going. We don't care who you are, where you come from, whether you're a man or a woman, what you ride, or how you ride it. If you come to the ABR Festival, you'll be made to feel welcome and like part of the family.

You're too old for the dirty festival life

He'll not like it when he reads this, but the man behind the ABR Festival and this



In Association with: **BRIDGESTONE**

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ppa **INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER AWARDS** Event Of The Year Finalist 2019

magazine, Alun, is way past that lifestyle too. So, when we set about planning and conceptualising the event, we were guided by the insight of a fella who's been there, done that, and doesn't want to go back.

As I've said, facilities will be first-class and there's plenty of top-quality accommodation in the surrounding area if your back isn't up for a weekend of sleeping on the ground.

It's expensive

Why should you pay £99 to go to a bike festival when you can go and camp in someone's field for £20? Other bike festivals aren't that expensive!

Is £99 expensive for a three-day, two-night event where camping is included? An event where, once you're through the gates, pretty much everything else is yours to use free of charge?

It takes a heck of a lot of money to put on such a first-class event in magnificent surroundings and with such quality facilities. In a lot of places, you'll be hard pushed to get a hotel room for the night for less than £100, but here you can camp out in glorious settings, ride purpose-built trails, test ride the latest bikes on the market, get off-road tuition, join group rideouts, hear from inspiring guest speakers, rock out

to live music, and much, much more for under £100.

When you put it that way, perhaps we should be charging more!

You're worried the event won't go ahead because of Coronavirus

Yep, 2020's event was postponed because it was impossible for us to host such a large gathering – what's to say 2021's event will actually go ahead? You don't want to buy a ticket and then lose your money!

OK, I'll be frank with you. Nobody knows what the situation regarding the Coronavirus is going to look like next year. There's a lot of uncertainty about and making plans is all the more difficult because of it.

We want you to be as confident as possible when putting down your money for the 2021 Adventure Bike Rider Festival that we're offering you an unbeatable guarantee. If the event can't go ahead because of Coronavirus, we'll give you the choice of a full refund or the option of rolling your tickets over to the following year.

So, as you can see, there's really no reason why you shouldn't be coming to the Adventure Bike Rider Festival 2021. The good news is that we still have some Early Bird tickets remaining, though they're selling out fast. **ABR**

THE ABR FESTIVAL CORONAVIRUS GUARANTEE

We want you to be confident in your purchase when you buy a ticket to the ABR Festival 2021. Our promise to you is that if the event has to be cancelled because of Coronavirus, all ticket holders will be offered either a full refund or the opportunity to roll their ticket over to the following year's event.

LAST CHANCE TO GET YOUR EARLY BIRD TICKETS

As we go to print with this issue of the magazine, there are still a handful of Early Bird Tickets remaining. These hugely discounted tickets give you full, three-day, two-night access to the ABR Festival with camping included for just £69. That's a saving of £30 on full price tickets. So, don't dilly dally, head on over to www.adventurebikerider.com/festival2021 to get your tickets today and lock in your savings.

What: Adventure Bike Rider Festival 2021

When: Friday 25 to Sunday 27 June, 2021

How to book: Visit:

www.adventurebikerider.com/festival2021




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UK

GREEN LANES

LEGAL TRAIL RIDING IN THE UK

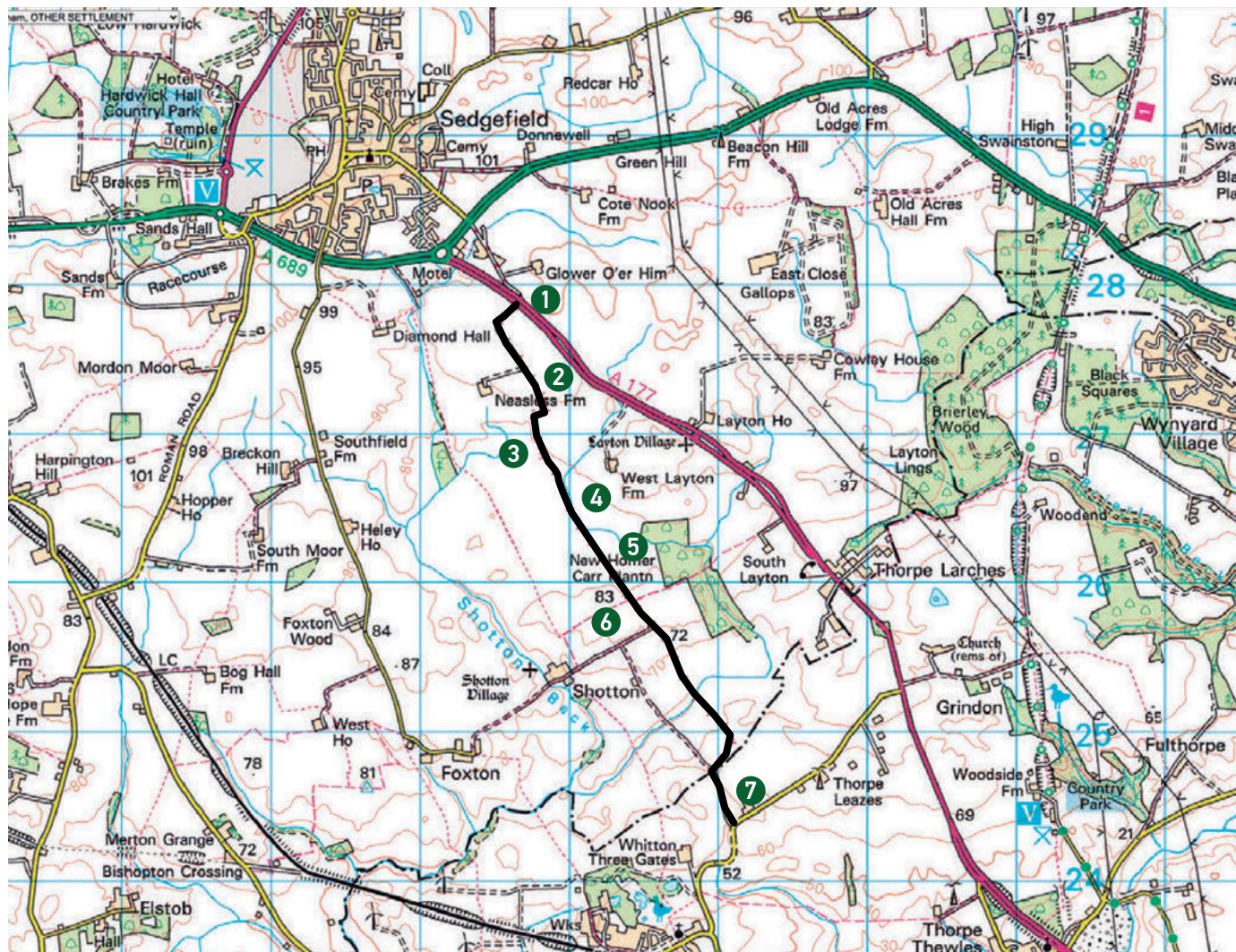
THIS ISSUE: SEDGEFIELD, COUNTY DURHAM AND BOTALLACK MINE, CORNWALL

Words and photos: **Mike Beddows**

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

No	ABR	Name/Location (see map)	No	ABR	Name/Location (see map)	No	ABR	Name/Location (see map)
1	9	Kiln Bent/Ramsden Road (W Yorks)	33	27	A Trip Around Vigo Village (Kent)	66	44	Hexham Lane (County Durham)
2	9	Stanage Edge (Peak District)	34	28	Llwybr Ceiriog Trail (North Wales)	67	45	Offas Dyke (Shropshire)
3	10	Salter Fell (Lancashire)	35	28	Toft Hill Trail (North Yorkshire)	68	45	Slaley Forest (Northumberland)
4	10	Wayfarer Trail (North Wales)	36	29	Breasthigh Road (Cumbria)	69	46	Foxton Lane (North Yorkshire)
5	11	Rowland (Peak District)	37	29	Four More Kent Byways (Kent)	70	46	Berkshire Downs
6	11	Sarn Helen, Betws-y-Coed (Wales)	38	30	Coast to Coast	71	47	Back Lane / High Lane (Yorkshire Dales)
7	12	Strata Florida (Mid Wales)	39	31	Pheasant Penn Steps (North Wales)	72	47	Lambourn Downs (Oxfordshire)
8	12	Corwen Car Wash (North Wales)	40	31	Harrop Edge (West Yorkshire)	73	48	Houndkirk Moor (Peak District)
9	12	Winton (Cumbria)	41	32	Holmfirth Trails (West Yorkshire)	74	48	Malpas Lanes (Cheshire)
10	13	Old Coach Road (Lake District)	42	32	Settle Trails (North Yorkshire)	75	49	Cheshire Lanes (Cheshire)
11	13	Sarn Helen (South Wales)	43	33	Settle Trails, Part 2 (North Yorkshire)	76	49	Clun Lanes (Shropshire)
12	14	Beginner's Loop (The Cotswolds)	44	33	Glaisdale Rigg (North Yorkshire)	77	50	Soar y Mynydd (Mid Wales)
13	15	Rudland Rigg (North Yorkshire)	45	34	Masham Moor (Yorkshire)	78	50	Ughill Moor (South Yorkshire)
14	15	Three Shires (The Peak District)	46	34	Stonehenge (Wiltshire)	79	51	Cadair Idris (North Wales)
15	16	Farm Trails (North Yorkshire)	47	35	Bwlch Y Rhiwygr (Wales)	80	51	Teignmouth (Devon)
16	16	Pant Lane Farm (Mid Wales)	48	35	Salisbury Trails (Wiltshire)	81	52	Happy Valley (North Wales)
17	17	Mynydd Bach (Brecon Beacons)	49	36	Roman Road (Yorkshire Dales)	82	52	Mold Trails (North Wales)
18	17	Little Langdale (Lake District)	50	36	Rivington Pike (West Pennines)	83	53	Dawlish (Devon)
19	18	Askam in Furness Coastal Trail (Cumbria)	51	37	Inmoor Lane (Yorkshire Dales)	84	53	Water Breaks Its Neck (Mid Wales)
20	18	Macmillan Way (Gloucestershire)	52	37	Danby Beacon (Moorland Tracks)	85	54	Littleton Drew (Wiltshire)
21	19	Fosse Way (Somerset)	53	38	Charity Lane, Macclesfield Old Rd (Peak District)	86	54	Kemble (Gloucestershire)
22	20	Stalling Busk (Yorkshire Dales)	54	38	Thurriish Lane (West Yorkshire)	87	55	Dolgellau (North Wales)
23	21	Bwlch Groes (North Wales)	55	39	Llwybr Ceiriog Trail (North Wales)	88	55	Salisbury Whoops (Wiltshire)
24	21	The Highway (Yorkshire Dales/Cumbria)	56	39	Whitstones and Hafod Adams (North Wales)	89	56	Hell Lane (West Dorset)
25	22	Claerwen Reservoir (Mid Wales)	57	40	Salisbury Plain (Wiltshire)	90	56	Sunken Lane (South Wales)
26	22	Cyffylliog Trails (North Wales)	58	40	Shropshire Trails (Shropshire)	91	57	Mach Loop Trail (Wales)
27	23	Kings Lynn, Hunstanton (Norfolk)	59	41	Butser Hill (South Downs)	92	57	Wye Valley Walk (Mid Wales)
28	25	Chatsworth & Two Dales (Peak District)	60	41	Long Mynd (Shropshire)	93	58	Eyam (Peak District)
29	25	Kirkby Stephen Trails (Cumbria)	61	42	Ashley Down/Parnhold Wood (Hampshire)	94	58	Pindale and Dirlow Rake (Peak District)
30	26	Golf Links (Rhayader)	62	42	Lower Claerwen (Mid Wales)	95	59	Sedgefield (County Durham)
31	26	Four of North Kent's byways (Kent)	63	43	Horndean (Hampshire)	96	59	Botallack Mine (Cornwall) ➤
32	27	Alcester Trails (Warwickshire)	64	43	Llwybr Ceiriog extension (North Wales)			
			65	44	Clwydian Hills (North Wales)			

Marker positions are approximate.



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95 SEDGEFIELD, COUNTY DURHAM

It had been six months since my last ride so I was pleased when coronavirus restrictions were eased and I managed to enjoy a social-distanced weekend riding with a good friend. He lives in Durham so this would be our starting point. Just a few miles south of the city lies what he says is the best lane in the area. It's located close to junction 60 of the A1, so is easily accessible for anyone venturing this way.

I have to admit to being quite shaky on this trail. It's amazing how a lengthy period off the bike can knock your confidence. The lane, located near Sedgefield, is very rutted and muddy in places. Be aware the lane is subject to a winter voluntary traffic regulation order (VTRO) which asks people on motorcycles and in 4x4s to bypass it in winter, particularly in wet conditions, to help preserve the lane.



THE FACTS

DISTANCE:
2.5 miles

NEAREST TOWN:
Sedgefield

MAPS:
Middlesbrough, OS
Landranger 93

START/END
GRID REFERENCE:
NZ366278 / NZ380243

DIFFICULTY RATING:
3

WOW FACTOR:
2

OTHER TRAILS:
Slaley Forest is about a 25 minutes ride away. See ABR issue 45.

THE ROUTE

1-2

If turning right into the lane, take care as you will cross four lanes of traffic. The lane is a car's width wide and hard compacted as it leads towards Neasless Farm. There are a few puddles and the surface is loose in places. At the bend, take the left (straight on) track, as the right will only take you to the farm.

2-3

The track changes here as it passes beneath the trees. It's narrower with grass growing in the middle but still a solid base to ride on. Continue round a sharp right then left bend. Pass through the gate, and there is a sign stating the VTRO.

3-4

The lane changes once again. It is now overgrown and very rutted. It has a grassy, muddy base, and keep an eye out for the ruts. If it's raining, it can get very slippery in the wet. Pass through another gate. The trail opens up a bit now as there are open fields to the right but be careful as the ditch on the right is full of water. When overgrown, it's not easy to see.

4-5

There are still three rutted lines, the common four-wheel drive tracks, and the standard motorbike track in the middle. The going now becomes tougher in places with deep muddy ruts, so take care. It's not easy to jump the ruts if you need to, so choose your route carefully.

5-6

Proceed through another gate. You almost lose the track now as it's so overgrown. It gets a lot worse with lots of deep mud and ruts. Go through another gate and onto a solid base. I've got to admit to sweating a lot by now, but there's easier riding ahead.

6-7

The track heads right to the farm. Proceed through a gate and the track becomes overgrown again. Head beneath the trees as the track narrows. Continue onto the next gate and then onto another at the end of this green lane where you meet the tarmac. ➤

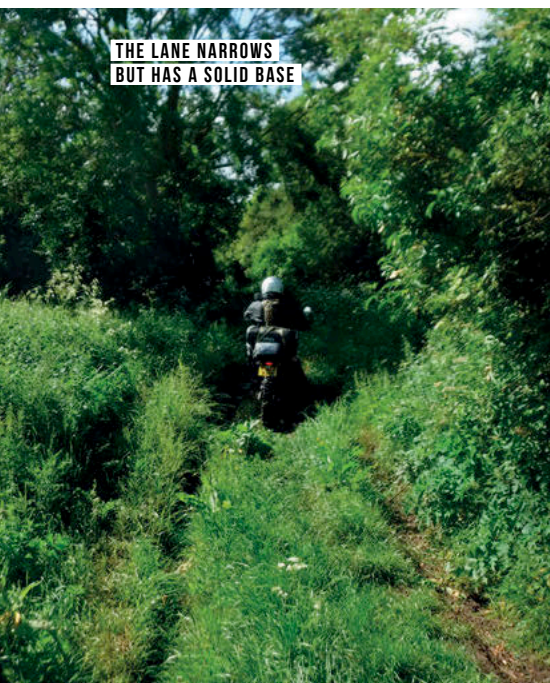
WATCH OUT FOR FARM ANIMALS



THE TRAIL BECOMES OVERGROWN



THE LANE NARROWS
BUT HAS A SOLID BASE



ALWAYS CLOSE
GATES BEHIND YOU





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96 BOTALLACK MINE, CORNWALL

A

s a small boy, I remember my grandparents had a painting on their wall of some Cornish tin mines. I'd also previously seen photos of the

tin mines on various Trans Euro Trail chat forums but this was my time to see them for real, and I wasn't disappointed.

Seeing the tin mine ruins come into view on a misty morning will stay with me for the rest of my life. I pulled over, brewed up, and spent an hour wandering among the ruins. The Atlantic Ocean crashing against the rocks below was a magnificent sight.

This trail itself is fairly straightforward and can be ridden on a bigger adventure with any tyres in the dry, apart from section 1-2 which requires decent off-road rubber. I enjoyed my ride on the trail so much, I turned right around and did it again for a second time.



THE FACTS

DISTANCE:
4.5 miles

NEAREST TOWN:
St Just

MAPS:
Explorer 102, Land's End

START/END

GRID REFERENCE:
SW354212 / SW374340

DIFFICULTY RATING:
2

WOW FACTOR:
5

OTHER TRAILS:

Cornwall has limited green lanes but check out the Great Western Trail section of the Trans Euro Trail

THE ROUTE

1-2

Ride along a tarmac single-track road, passing a bronze age burial ground on the left which is worth a quick stop. The off-road track is obvious and starts as you ride between concrete pillars. There should be a fantastic sea view to the left but unfortunately for me I rode on an overcast and rainy day. There are plenty of loose rocks to bounce over so take care as you proceed downhill, but it's nothing too technical. There's a large stone wall to the right with a golf course behind. This section ends at Cape Cornwall which is a good location to stop and take some photos.

2-3

A tarmac section.

3-4

When the track begins, you soon pass a turning on the left (gated) but continue straight on. The track is wide and easy. It consists of a hard-compacted base with only a few small stones and occasional puddles. Pass another turning to the left but keep going. You pass a further turning to the left which is sign posted National

Trust. Keep heading straight on proceeding uphill along the legal byway. Towards the top there are turnings right and left. Just keep heading straight. The route is pretty obvious.

4-5

As you crest the top of the hill, the first of the tin mine ruins comes into view, and the second follows a short distance ahead. It really is dramatic scenery. I spent an hour wandering between these two ruins soaking up their history. As you pass the first tin mine, stay on the higher track, the one heading left is a footpath only. Again, the track hasn't changed. It's very easy going and fairly wide. It shouldn't trouble anyone and could even be attempted with road tyres if care is taken.

5-6

The track now heads inland and, despite a few turnings off the main byway, is fairly obvious.

6-7

At the T-junction, turn left. Again, ignore the many turn offs and stick to the main graded track. You pass a couple of

houses on the right and please take care here as they are residential. As you pass some ruins on the right, the workings of Botallack Mine comes into view. This is private property so don't go exploring. There are more mine workings off to the left as you proceed slightly downhill.

7-8

Pass a house on the right and head downhill through a dip. Stay to the right for the easiest approach up the next hill. This is probably the hardest section on the trail so, if you are unsure or using road tyres, maybe it's worth missing out. However, make sure you take a look as there's plenty of space to turn a bike round for the duration of this trail.

8-9

The three Levent Mine ruins (I say ruins, they look pretty spectacular to me) come into view. Turn right at the carpark and continue along the trail to the tarmac, passing another ruin on the left. If you have the time, be sure to stop and enjoy a tour around the mines to find out about this area of Cornwall's rich history. **ABR**

THE TRAIL WIDENS



SEA MIST ROLLS IN



WAVES CRASH
ONTO THE COASTLINE



A BOTALLACK MINE RUIN



10 YEARS OF ADVENTURE

The *ABR* team reveal their ultimate rides from the past

10 years of *Adventure Bike Rider* magazine. How many have you ridden?





COMBE LAVAL, VERCORS, FRANCE

Alun Davies, *ABR* Founder and Publisher

Years ago, when I fancied myself as a mountaineer, I came across a photo of a guy walking on an incredibly exposed via ferrata route in the middle of an enormous rock face in the Dolomites, Italy.

The image was so dramatic I just had to go there and walk that ledge. In fact the route was amazing and I ended up climbing every via ferrata route in the Dolomites, writing about them in just about every national newspaper in the UK.

Anyway, years ago I came across a photo of a guy riding a push bike on the incredibly exposed 'Combe Laval' road in the middle of an enormous rock face in the Vercors region of France. There wasn't much information about the place online, so I knew that I had to go there, see it for myself and get the same picture but with a motorcycle instead. Within a month of seeing the photo, I took the shot to the left of Bryn riding through the now-famous archway on the Combe Laval.

Just go and ride it, the experience is breath-taking and so is the rest of the Vercors.



DENVER TO LA, USA

Bryn Davies, *ABR* Editor

After an incredible eight days of riding the off-road mountain passes of Colorado with John Hax of 106West Adventures, I picked up a Harley-Davidson Ultra Ltd in Denver and pointed my front wheel west. I had no plan and no accommodation booked, the only certainty was that I had to be in LA in four days' time to catch a flight.

For the next four days I shot across the wild and rugged landscapes of Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada and California, eating my weight in breakfast burritos and seeing some of the most visually impressive and emotionally stimulating scenery I've come across. Monument Valley, Bryce Canyon, Death Valley, Yosemite... Each and every place left me in awe.

I met great people, I threw away \$100 in the slots in Vegas, and tested myself in the 47.5C heat of Death Valley. I had an unexplained run-in with a non-human spectre in the pitch-black American wilderness (no, really), experienced the kindness of strangers when I was offered a couch to sleep on, a safe place to park my bike, and a crate of beer to drink in Fresno.

There have been more extreme trips I've been on, and there have been more adventurous, but this ride is one that will stay with me for the rest of my life, and I'll always be thankful that a love of biking allowed me to experience it.



B500, GERMANY

James Oxley, *ABR* Assistant Editor

My best mate was having a hard time. He was slap bang in the middle of a messy divorce and it seemed like the world was closing in on him from all sides. Of course, my solution to ease his woes was to take a bike trip.

We set off to the Alps and along the way crossed into Germany to ride the fabled B500 through the Black Forest, and boy am I glad we did. We discovered a sensational road that snaked its way for 40 miles from Baden-Baden in the north to Freudenstadt in the south.

We carved through long, sweeping curves for endless miles, our bikes dancing from left to right, and back again in tandem, while our tyres gorged on the obscene levels of grip offered by the smooth road surface. There is something special about the way the B500 unfurls like a ribbon of silk across the landscape that creates a rhythm to your riding, as we passed through postcard-perfect meadows and pine forest. Riding the B500 still ranks as one of my most enjoyable experiences on a motorcycle.

But best of all, when my mate and I pulled over after an hour of glorious riding, he lifted off his helmet to reveal a beaming smile, the first I'd seen on his face in months. So, while the B500 hadn't fixed his problems, it had certainly provided a welcome respite from them. Motorcycling has a habit of doing that for you.



CONNEMARA NATIONAL PARK, IRELAND

Ollie Rooke, *ABR* Staff Writer

My dad and I ventured into the Connemara National Park on a stretch of the N59 during a father-son bike trip to Ireland. We started in Galway and curled our way west for 89 miles along a glorious stretch of tarmac to Westport. The road features everything a biker could desire including tight bends, long sweeping curves, and easy-going straights that allow you to soak up the vast Irish countryside.

The joy of riding such a stunning road was multiplied by the fact I was sharing the experience with my Dad. After some tumultuous years that featured me leaving home and my parent's divorce, our two very different worlds were once again joined through a shared passion, in the most breathtaking of surroundings.

I'm always struck by how many letters and messages we receive from parents and their children who explore the world together by bike, and it's touching to see how many reference *ABR* as their inspiration for getting into (or back into) the saddle. All I can say is, if you're looking to make memories that last a lifetime, a bike trip is the way to go. I've had some amazing days behind the handlebars since then, but none will beat the memory of sharing that perfect stretch tarmac in one of my favourite countries in the world with my old man.



STRATA FLORIDA, WALES

Julian Challis, *ABR* Bike Tester

Although I've ridden some incredible roads, from the Ho Chi Min Trail in Laos to the Khardung La Pass in the Indian Himalayas, my favourite road is much closer to home, the Strata Florida in Wales. It is without doubt one of the most challenging, wonderful and life affirming routes I have ever ridden.

Riding it for the first time, it's hard to imagine many things more intense. The route begins with a fast and undulating track following the Towy Valley, before diving into forestry and emerging into the first of some 20 or so rock strewn river crossings and enormous puddles.

This drowned-out track runs alongside and through the forest on the way to the Abbey some 10 miles away. On my first time, I saw bikes and riders literally disappearing beneath the water in front and alongside me, but somehow, I managed to stay upright and perhaps more miraculously, emerge with a grin that would barely fit in my helmet.

Since then I've ridden Strata Florida numerous times in subsequent Welsh Enduros, on trial rides with my mates from the Bristol TRF and more recently on the Welsh section of the Trans European Trail. But nothing can compare to that incredible first time and I'm convinced that the experience is solely responsible for my love of adventure motorcycling.



GOVEDARTSI TO SAPAREVA BANYA, BULGARIA

Mike Beddows, *ABR* green lanes contributor

Back in 2016, I was fortunate enough to have my Husqvarna TE449 shipped to Bulgaria. After years of trail riding in the UK on legal routes, it was a culture shock arriving in Bulgaria, because you can literally ride wherever you want to.

One of the best rides I did was to a village called Govedartsi. A dirt track wound its way along the valley floor in front of us but it was the rest of the valley, including the sides, that were the best riding I have ever done. A river flowed through the valley floor which we forded so many times. We'd take a quick blast up some steep logging tracks and then try to pick the best route back down. There was fast riding across short grassy sections and a few jumps thrown in for good measure. We could make it as hard or easy as we wanted. Fast or slow, it was our choice.

To top it off, after an hour's ride, we arrived at our destination, the spa town of Sapareva Banya. For a few quid, we had access to the luxury spa with its many hot pools and jacuzzis. It was simply amazing, and to top it off, we had the ride back to look forward to.

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	Representative Example	Finance Example
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Agreement duration	25 months	25 months
Deposit	£8,318.14	£5,682.61
Cash price	£32,995.00	£22,695.00
Total amount of credit	£24,676.86	£17,012.39
Optional final repayment	£16,790.00	£14,379.00
Total amount payable	£35,068.14	£24,261.61
Purchase fee*	£10.00	£10.00
Interest rate (fixed)	4.77%	4.76%
Representative APR	4.9% APR	-
APR	-	4.9% APR

*£10 purchase fee included in the optional final repayment.
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CHARLEY BOORMAN

JAMES OXLEY catches up with Charley Boorman to discuss *Long Way Up*, a 13,000-mile electric motorcycle adventure through the Americas with his pal Ewan McGregor

It's been more than a decade since Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman rode triumphantly into Cape Town at the end of a journey that saw them travel the length of Africa on their BMW R 1200 GS Adventure motorcycles.

The resulting television programme *Long Way Down* was a hit when it aired in 2007, beaming the joy of adventure biking into the homes of millions of people around the world, and built on the huge success of their original globetrotting journey, *Long Way Round*.

The boys were riding high. They were the most recognisable faces in adventure biking and managed to bring the niche activity of riding a motorcycle to far flung corners of the world into the mainstream. The duo could also take at least partial credit for the explosion in the popularity of adventure bikes, with the BMW models they rode regularly topping motorcycle sales charts.

So why has it taken 13 years for Ewan and Charley to reunite for another adventure? The answer is simple. In the years following that arrival in Cape Town, the two friends drifted apart.

Speaking from his home in London, Charley said: "It's been over 10 years since we did the last one and we always said we wanted to do a third one. Ewan moved to America and we all got busy

with our lives, and Ewan and I kind of drifted apart a little bit. Then in 2016, I managed to have a really big motorcycle accident. I really smashed myself quite badly and Ewan and I kind of connected again together.

"I was stuck at home, mostly because I broke both my legs badly, so I couldn't really get around. Ewan was over here working and he ended up coming and staying (at Charley's home). He was going to stay a week and ended up staying about a month, so we sort of reconnected again with each other.

"And then we started talking about doing another *Long Way* and I remember Dave (Alexanian) and Russ (Malkin), our partners who produced *Long Way Round* and *Down* and now finally *Up*, came around for a barbecue. We were chatting and thinking how it would be nice to do another one. Then we came up with the idea of doing it on electric bikes because we'd already done it a couple of times on petrol motorcycles and we thought what are we going to do differently?"

The decision to use electric power rather than petrol came as shock to fans around the world, many of whom assumed they would once again ride BMW's flagship adventure bike. Perhaps even more of a surprise was the choice bike itself, the Harley-Davidson's Livewire, a manufacturer and machine not widely known for their adventure travel credentials.

Charley said: "Harley-Davidson really stepped up and made these stunningly beautiful bikes, and the Livewire is

beautiful really, it's a proper motorbike. I think the only way you would explain the standard Livewire is that it would be a naked sports bike. It handles incredibly well and the acceleration is bonkers. It's like strapping yourself onto the most crazy rollercoaster you've ever ridden. It's just an amazing thing to ride.

"And then they changed the front end, they jacked it up, they jacked up the back, they put panniers on, they made the handlebars higher. They really went to town for us and created what I suppose is the first electric adventure motorcycle, that took us 13,000 miles all the way up through South and Central America.

"I remember sitting there in Costa Rica. We'd come to this huge solar farm, we knocked on their door and asked if we could film and get a charge. We went in and they showed us how the whole thing worked, this big solar farm. Meanwhile, we'd plugged the bikes in and we could see the sun hitting these solar panels and pretty much going straight into our motorbikes. It was so cool."

Unfortunately, solar farms didn't line the route, so Ewan and Charley found themselves relying on the kindness of strangers to charge their bikes.

He said: "I don't think I realised what a journey it was going to end up being. Because it was electric, no-one's really done a big journey like this, especially in South America where there are no fast chargers. We would literally be relying on going up to people and saying: "Please can we plug in?" So, we would stop somewhere and ►



have some lunch and meet someone, and the first thing we would do is plug into their restaurant or house.

"It was quite interesting but it made the whole show very different. I remember on the last shows, we'd spend quite a lot of time in petrol stations filling up and just hanging out. This time we were hanging out with people more because we were plugging into their lives by plugging into their sockets. It was really cool. A steep learning curve but really cool."

Charley added: "During the journey, Ewan and I would sit there sometimes and think, whose idea was this? And Ewan would say well actually it was ours! I think this trip felt a little bit like *Long Way Round*, the first one that we did, where we were heading off to the east and towards Russia, and we didn't really know what to expect."

The excitement of striking out into the unknown built to a crescendo at the start of the journey when bad weather repeatedly delayed their departure from the southern tip of the Americas.

Charley said: "We had to postpone leaving because we had these snowstorms going on while we were down in

Ushuaia. We really hit the wrong time of year down there. It was so cold it was unbelievable. And finally, we left on this blue-sky day, riding out of Ushuaia on these electric motorcycles thinking right, we've only got 13,000 miles to go and three months to do it in. And then you think, what are we doing? This is crazy. It was a real balance of everything and a mixed bag of emotions when we finally left."

Charley added: "It was great to get out on the road, and for the two of us to ride again together was just fantastic. It was really nice. I'd forgotten how much I'd missed riding with Ewan. It's tough for all of us. You work all week, you go for a Sunday ride, you've got family commitments as well, and life gets in the way. I think that's what happened to Ewan and I over that 12 or 13 years. Life just got in the way and we just didn't find the time. And once I had that accident, that's where we connected again together."

"A lot happens to people in 10 years. Lots of stuff goes on and all sorts of things happen. It's very rare and very fortunate to be able to get three months to jump on a motorcycle and ride and

have that experience with a great mate. They're very precious moments."

Despite relishing being on the road together again, there was the small task of riding electric motorcycles through Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and up through Colombia, Central America and Mexico, before reaching Los Angeles. I asked Charley if he ever thought he'd bitten off more than he could chew.

He said: "Gosh yes, loads of times, and not just because of the batteries. In Bolivia, it was really tough. We were at very high altitude in the desert, I mean stunningly beautiful deserts, but the roads were all gravel and very sandy and were incredible washboard, corrugated dirt roads. Ewan and I have travelled quite a lot around the world and that was the worst corrugation I've ever ridden on. It was bone shaking and we were right in the middle of absolutely nowhere, so that was a huge challenge."

"That was the only time I really suffered with my legs that were quite painful. I've been left with this bad ankle and bad knee from my accidents and that was real boneshaking stuff. Then you become more fearful because you're much more likely ►



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to fall off because of the bad conditions, and then Ewan was nervous thinking, God if he falls off, he's going to destroy his legs again. So, all this was going on in our minds, and the minute you start thinking like that when riding a motorbike, you start to ride defensively and that's totally wrong, so I had to keep throwing those thoughts out of my head."

Ewan and Charley were joined on their adventure by a returning cast of familiar faces, including cameramen Claudio von Planta and Jimmy Simak, along with producers Russ and Dave. However, despite enjoying some support on the road, the pair still faced the challenge of riding 13,000 miles across some of the most remote and inhospitable landscapes in the world in just three months.

Charley said: "I think you can always have more time. I remember Ewan and I met this one guy. He was riding down through South America, we're coming up, and he had a year and a half to do this. He said he'd already done four months and he wasn't even out of Central America yet."

"I don't think it matters how much time you have, you never have enough. It was a challenge some days, especially in the

beginning when it was very cold and the bikes weren't doing as many miles as we thought. There was the adjustment of learning the technology and getting used to it and getting used to being back on the road again, packing up and moving every day. It takes a little bit of time to settle into that rhythm."

Settle into that rhythm they certainly did, and in December 2019 they found themselves arriving in Los Angeles and the end of their journey. I asked Charley why they didn't continue north through America and Canada, all the way up to Alaska?

He said: "On *Long Way Round*, we'd done Canada and Alaska already, and then I suppose you've got to finish somewhere. When we finished in Los Angeles, we had this big gathering with friends and family and my daughters came out to LA and met me at the end of the trip with my wife. Ewan just loved the idea of having that big party at the end, when we had loads of friends riding in on bikes, and then at the end of the party he just jumped on his adventure bike and rode home. He said it was so bizarre. He got home and he just parked up the bike and went inside, slept, and then the next

morning woke up and there was his motorbike that he'd ridden to his doorstep, which was very cool."

With the third instalment of the *Long Way* series hitting our screens on September 18 via Apple TV+, it could be seen as the natural end to a trilogy, or have Ewan and Charley got another journey up their sleeves?

Charley said: "Long Way Down Under, that would be nice! When you finish a big trip, in order for it to be ok to finish that trip, you always talk about another one so that somehow in your mind it's easier to finish this one because you know you've got one in the bank for later. So, I would love to, I'd love to do something. We often thought about doing a couple of shorter ones as well, rather than spending three-and-a-half months on the road, we'd spend a month and just do a small area. So, we might do that, you never know."

The first three episodes of Long Way Up will premiere globally on Apple TV+ on Friday, September 18, and new episodes will roll out weekly. **ABR**



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AMAZING IRELAND

SOUTH WEST IRELAND

OLLIE ROOKE discovers the joy of riding the Emerald Isle on a stunning two-day route around the south west of Ireland

There's something almost mythical about the lure of Ireland. Some are attracted by magnificent scenery, others enjoy the warmth of the locals and the craic in the evening, and for a few, including myself, a look into their family tree will show a genetic attachment to the land. It's a country that pulls at my heartstrings more than any other and one of the most alluring destinations for riders looking for adventure on the British Isles. This route showcases the very best of the south west of Ireland for those looking to explore the mythical Emerald Isle for themselves.

I've designed the route to be ridden across two days, leaving plenty of time to explore the sights along the way. However, there is a one-day option which skips the stunning Ring of Kerry for those short on time or people who have already journeyed around this famous loop.

We start in Cobh, the final stop of the world's most famous passenger ship, the Titanic, before her fateful maiden voyage, and then travel west through County Cork. The riding here is stunning, especially the coastal roads where you'll find the rugged coastline on your left and rolling green hills to your right. After travelling through Cork, we'll cross into County Kerry, exploring the wild and remote peninsulas that jut out into the Atlantic Ocean like wandering tree roots.

Along the way, we'll stop at a series of poignant, quirky, and awe-inspiring sights that display Ireland's diverse and varied landscape and history. We'll travel along the iconic Ring of Kerry, a must-do for anyone visiting the area for the first time, while also tackling the remote and achingly beautiful Healy Pass. So, without further ado, let's get started.

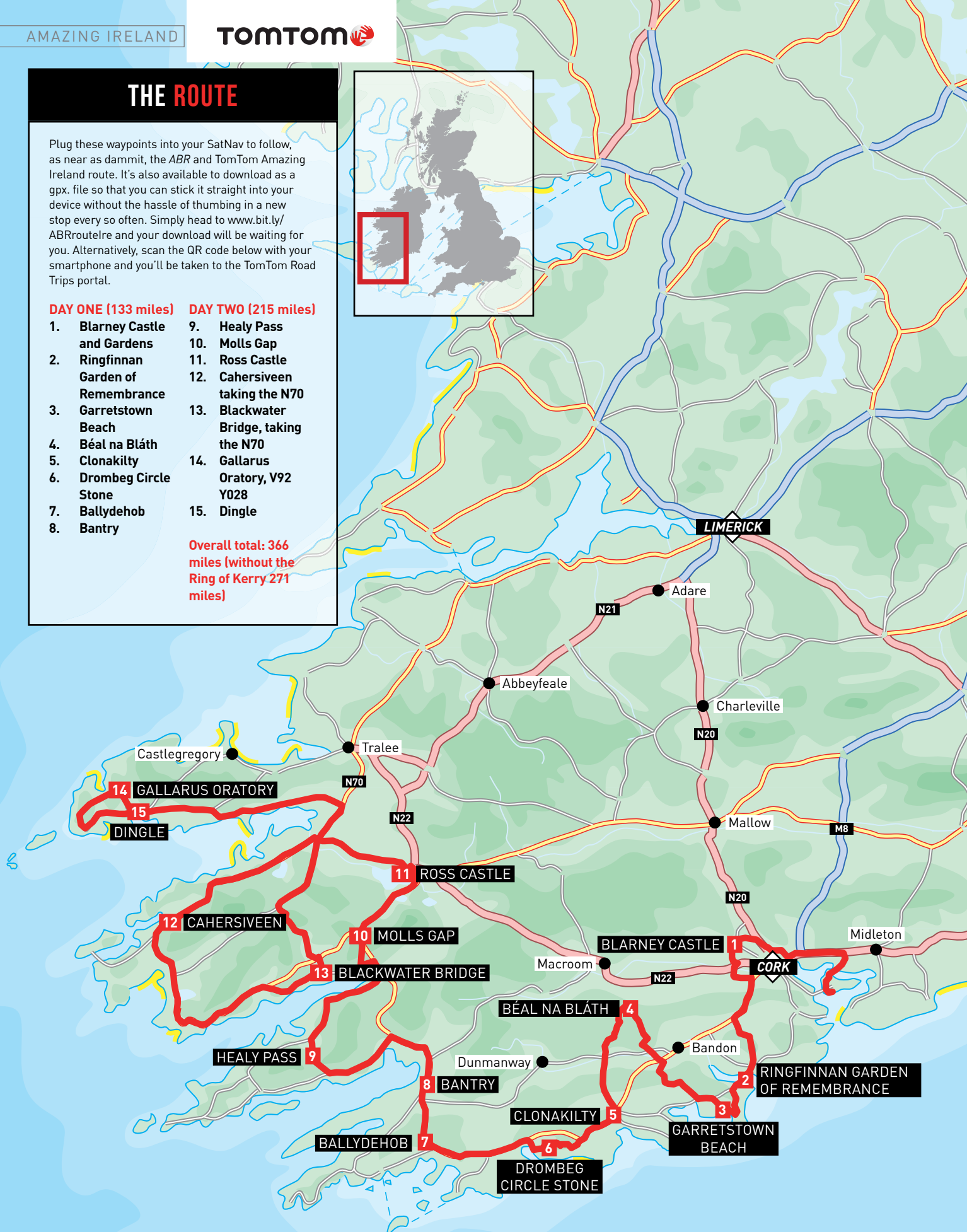
THE ROUTE

Plug these waypoints into your SatNav to follow, as near as dammit, the ABR and TomTom Amazing Ireland 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/ABRrouteire 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.

DAY ONE (133 miles) DAY TWO (215 miles)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Blarney Castle and Gardens | 9. Healy Pass |
| 2. Ringfinnan Garden of Remembrance | 10. Molls Gap |
| 3. Garretstown Beach | 11. Ross Castle |
| 4. Béal na Bláth | 12. Cahersiveen taking the N70 |
| 5. Clonakilty | 13. Blackwater Bridge, taking the N70 |
| 6. Drombeg Circle Stone | 14. Gallarus Oratory, V92 Y028 |
| 7. Ballydehob | 15. Dingle |
| 8. Bantry | |

Overall total: 366 miles (without the Ring of Kerry 271 miles)



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COLOURFUL
TOWNHOUSES OF COBH

1. Cobh

Our journey begins at Cobh, a quaint seaside town nestled outside the city of Cork. Located about a two-hour ride from Rosslare Harbour ferry port, it is the perfect place to spend the night, especially for those travellers who have made the crossing of the Irish sea on the ferry from Fishguard in Wales to ride this Amazing Ireland route.

There's more to Cobh than meets the eye though. As you sit by the harbour, enjoying the colourful collection of townhouses that line the streets, you'll be looking out over the RMS Titanic's final stop before her fateful voyage across the Atlantic in 1912. A memorial in the town honours the 79 passengers who didn't survive the journey.

2. Blarney Castle

From Cobh, we skirt around Cork on a quick 40-minute ride to Blarney Castle. The castle is a medieval stronghold dating back to the 1400s, but we're more interested with what is located within. After surveying the towering battlements, head inside and join the queue to kiss the Blarney Stone. According to local legend, when the Lord of Blarney heard he was to be deprived of his traditional land rights, he set off to see Queen Elizabeth I. Worried that he wasn't a good enough orator to change the Queen's mind, an old woman told him to kiss a particular stone in Blarney Castle to receive the gift of the gab. The Lord's trip was successful, the Queen's opinion was swayed, and it's now said any visitor who lays their lips on this block of limestone will be similarly armed with great eloquence.

FIND THE GIFT OF THE
GAB INSIDE BLARNEY CASTLE

3. Ringfinnan Garden of Remembrance

Leaving Blarney Castle behind, with eloquence guaranteed for life, we head back towards the coast and pass through typically picturesque Irish countryside. Shortly before our next stop, we pass through Kinsale, which is home to a number of cafés where you can grab a snack or your fix of caffeine. Refuelled, we head across the River Bandon to the Ringfinnan Garden of Remembrance. The garden was created by Kathleen Murphy, a nurse in New York City who was born in the area, in tribute to the firefighters who lost their lives in the 9/11 attacks. Isolated on top of a hill, it's a moving place to visit. Lines of trees stand in attention, each one honouring the life of the 343 heroic firefighters who didn't return from that fateful emergency call out. A small American flag flutters at the base of each tree. With your respects paid, it's time to saddle up again and hit the road.

THE 9/11
MEMORIAL AT RINGFINNAN

4. Béal na Bláth

Heading back inland, we once again wind our way along country roads to the small village of Béal na Bláth. This stop gives us a small insight into a crucial moment in Ireland's formative history. It was just outside this village in 1922 that Michael Collins, leader of Ireland's newly established Free State, was ambushed and killed by anti-treaty Irish Republican Army forces. In many ways his death typifies the events of the Irish Civil War, as Ireland's forces became divided over what to do next following the signing of a peace treaty with Britain in 1921. Collins was instrumental in the War of Independence and had been sent to London to negotiate the peace treaty with

THE MICHAEL COLLINS
MEMORIAL AT BÉAL NA BLÁTH



THE IRON AGE
DROMBERG STONE CIRCLE

Prime Minister David Lloyd George. However, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was not supported by many Republicans back home and a splinter occurred that split friends, families and Irish society, ultimately leading to further conflict, and Collins' early death in his home county of Cork.

5. Drombeg Stone Circle

Moving on, we drop back onto some stunning coastal roads that meander along the coastline as we approach the Drombeg Stone Circle. Also known as The Druid's Altar, the collection of 17 tightly packed stones appears to have been a funeral pyre in the Bronze to early Iron ages after excavations found the cremated remains of an adolescent in a pot at the very centre of the circle. After you've wondered at the skill of those early humans who managed to create such a monument, it's time to re-join the road that will take us to our final stop for the evening.



THE SUN SETS
OVER BANTRY BAY

6. Bantry Bay

The road into Bantry is a cracking one to finish up an enjoyable day of riding, leaving us with plenty of time to relax in the town in the evening. Twisty and wide, it offers the perfect balance to the narrow countryside lanes we tackled earlier in the day, quickly bringing us in to the town of Bantry. Made famous in song, Bantry is associated with the failed Irish Rebellion of 1798. Two years earlier, iconic Irish revolutionary Wolfe Tone had tried and failed to launch a rebellion with the help of 15,000 French troops. In the modern era the town is a fun stop for an evening, with plenty of typically Irish pubs hosting live music late into the night. Get yourself into the swing of things with a pint of the local stout, a Murphy's, and enjoy the craic. Sláinte!



THE WINDING
BENDS OF HEALY PASS

7. Healy Pass

Any hangovers from the previous night will quickly be vanquished by some of the best riding the south west of Ireland has to offer. We start off with a quick ride across to the Beara Peninsula where we tackle the magnificent Healy Pass. Created in 1847, the road has a dark history as one of Ireland's many famine roads, where poor and hungry workers were forced to work to earn food. Following some modern improvements, it's now a phenomenal ride although not one to take quickly. The narrow twists and turns take you up to an altitude of over 3,000m where you'll be gifted with stunning views over the otherworldly landscape it cuts through. It's worth taking this one cautiously though, the majority of the road is too narrow for two cars to pass and sheep frequently drop their own slippery obstacles on the road.



GET GOOD LUCK FOR
LIFE AT ROSS CASTLE

8. Ross Castle

Moving on from Healy Pass we hug the coast while enjoying terrific views across Kenmare Bay, before riding onto the famous Ring of Kerry briefly on our way to our next stop. Ross Castle was the last stronghold to surrender to Oliver Cromwell's Roundheads during the Irish Confederate Wars, but it's also home to a local legend. Word has it that O'Donoghue Mór, who built the castle, lives under the waters of the vast Lough Leane. Once every seven years, on the first morning of May, it's said he rises on his white horse to circle the lake. Anyone fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of him is said to be guaranteed good luck for life.

COASTAL VIEWS
ALONG THE RING OF KERRY

THE GALLARUS ORATORY

THE SPECTACULAR
DINGLE PENINSULA

COASTAL RIDING AT ITS BEST

9. Ring of Kerry

Next up we have the famous Ring of Kerry. While some may be dissuaded by the numerous campervans and tourist coaches that litter the road, there's no doubt that it's a road that needs to be ticked off at least once by any travelling motorcyclist in the area. It's a fantastic ride, offering plenty of twisty bends through narrow lanes that suddenly opens up with breathtaking views over the vast expanse of County Kerry. There are plenty of lanes to turn off as you reach the most westerly point, where you can catch your breath and dip your toes in the Atlantic Ocean. If you're feeling a bit peckish as you near the end of the loop, punch The Strawberry Field into your SatNav. It's a small cottage café that serves up mouth-watering pancakes, while the lyrical Kerry accents of the staff will have you dreaming of a move to this delightful corner of the world.

10. Gallarus Oratory

Tearing yourself away from those delicious pancakes, we cut across the Ring of Kerry, taking some of the lesser-used roads, before we join another coastal road on the Dingle Peninsula. The small fishing town of the same name will be our final stop for the day but we'll take a quick detour to visit the Gallarus Oratory. This chapel located at the very tip of the peninsula is estimated to have been built 1,000 years ago. Each stone has been cut perfectly to fit together, making the structure waterproof without any evidence of mortar being used to build it. The interior is lit by a tiny window and legend says anyone who climbs through it is guaranteed access to Heaven. Attempting to do so is frowned upon, although they do say God loves a trier.

11. Dingle

Finally, we loop around the end of the peninsula on our way to the small fishing town of Dingle, our final stop of the day and a beautiful place to spend an evening after a cracking day in the saddle. Reward yourself with spectacular views, a well-earned pint and a trip to Murphy's Ice Cream, home to some of the best ice cream I've ever tasted (mine's a Honeycomb Caramel). Here ends the Amazing Ireland Route, leaving you with the choice of a ride back to the ferry or continuing on northward to discover the Wild Atlantic Way. **ABR**

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 the route in the magazine. As is the case with all the TomTom Amazing Britain routes, yours will need to be in the UK or Ireland, it will need to be rideable in a weekend, and should feature a series of places to stop at and explore along the way.

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 to enter the contest. We look forward to seeing it.

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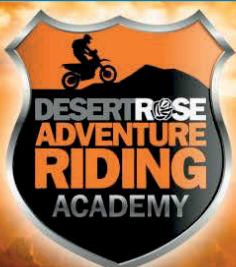
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PHOTOGRAPHY

CONTROLLING MANUAL FOCUS

SIMON THOMAS EXPLAINS HOW TAKING MANUAL CONTROL OF YOUR CAMERA'S FOCUS FUNCTION WILL HELP YOU CAPTURE STUNNING PHOTOGRAPHS ON YOUR MOTORCYCLE ADVENTURES

There's a word the strikes fear into the heart any would-be photographer: manual! But, before you start turning the page in horror, take a moment because in this article we're only talking about when and how to manually focus your camera.

Let's be honest, focus is one of the least considered aspects of most people's photography. Not because focus isn't crucial, but because most camera's auto-focus feature has become so very good that we (the shooters) no longer have to worry about turning a dial to manually focus in on our subject. For the most part, proper use of your camera's auto focus feature will provide great results. However, there are occasions when you will want or need to take full control of your camera's focusing process.

AUTO FOCUS VS MANUAL FOCUS

With auto focus selected, when you depress your camera's shutter actuation button to the half way point, you're engaging the auto focus system. Your camera then ploughs through thousands of algorithm's and computations and then guesses at what you want to be in focus and conversely, what you want out of focus. That's great but, like I said, your camera's guessing. Sure, it's a technologically sophisticated and highly calculated guess, but it's a guess nonetheless. Sometimes that guess can be plain wrong.

I first found this out the hard way in Africa when Lisa was struggling to push her bike through a section of thorny brush and scrub. Thinking this would make a great shot, I pulled out my camera and I started to photograph her. Later, when I checked the photos, I saw that the branches and leaves that had engulfed Lisa were perfectly in focus but Lisa and most of her bike were blurry. The camera was not able to distinguish or understand that I wanted Lisa and her bike to be the main focus of the shot. However, because she was in such close proximity to the branches, it had focused in and locked onto those. Manual focus is simple to understand. You turn a dial on the lens or the camera body, this moves glass inside the lens and you adjust until the subject of your photo is clear and sharply in focus.

USING MANUAL FOCUS

Let's get stuck in. Imagine you're out with your mates and ready to take your next cracking photo. Line up your shot and then look at your camera's settings. If your lens is wide-open (F5.6 or below) then your depth of field will be shallow. This is a great time to choose manual focus, especially if there is no clear separation between your key subject and other items (buildings, rocks, trees, branches, etc). So, next you need to find your camera's focus settings. Depending on your camera model, this might be found in a focus menu on your LCD screen, or it might be a physical button or switch. Select manual focus and turn it on.

Now, most modern cameras, especially mirrorless cameras, offer an additional focus feature called peaking. By default, this feature is often turned off. So, locate that in your menu and turn it on. Here's the good bit. With peaking turned on, your camera will (via the LCD



screen or through the view finder) actually highlight in white or red the edges of the elements in your frame that are truly in focus.

With your main subject's edges highlighted, you know it's sharp so press the shutter release button and grab your next focus-perfect image. A great example is the photo above of Lisa riding through Milford Sound, New Zealand. By using manual focus I managed to shoot her tack sharp, including the glare around the headlight.

OVERVIEW

So, let's recap. Decide if manual focus will help you get a perfect shot. Select and turn on focus highlight or peaking if your camera offers it. Select and turn on manual focus. Frame your shot and take the picture. Using these cool features to capture sensational images will also make you feel better about all the cash you spent on your new camera, just saying.

Take a moment and share your favourite images with myself and Lisa over at <https://www.facebook.com/2ridetheworld>. **ADR**



WHO'S WRITING?

Location: Milford Sound, New Zealand. Copyright: Simon and Lisa Thomas, www.2ridetheworld.com



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

HERE'S THE INFO FOR THE IMAGE:

CAMERA BODY: Nikon D3

LENS: Nikor 50mm f/1.4

FOCAL LENGTH: 50mm

FOCUS MODE: Manual

APERTURE: f/11

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/250 seconds

EXPOSURE MODE: manual

EXPOSURE COMP: 0

METERING: Spot

ISO SENSITIVITY: ISO 200

WHITE BALANCE: Standard

SPEED LIGHT/FLASH: Fired

PICTURE PROFILE: Neutral

SHARPENING: 1

CONTRAST: -1

BRIGHTNESS: 0

SATURATION: 1

HUE: 0

PROCESSED WITH: Luminar 4



TECHNIQUES

RELAX TO IMPROVE YOUR RIDING TECHNIQUE

MISTI HURST EXPLAINS HOW UNDERSTANDING WHAT CAUSES YOUR BODY TO TENSE UP IN THE SADDLE CAN TRANSFORM YOUR RIDING OVERNIGHT

A good friend of mine recently gave me this advice: “When you know more, you do less.” He was actually referring to the martial art of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu but I was struck by how the same theory holds for riding a motorcycle.

For most of us, riding is a way to escape the stress of our day-to-day lives and find some relaxation. It is ironic then that one of the main things that holds us back while riding is tension. Tension in our back, tension in our neck, and tension in our arms. Any tension in our body prevents your bike from working the way it was designed to and prevents us from enjoying it as much as we should. No one wants to deal with arm pump, numb, tingly hands, stiff shoulders, or a tight neck after a long day in the twisties.

As riders we do so much work. We grip the handlebars tightly, muscle the bike, wiggle, bounce, move around, and put too much effort into trying to ride fast or ride well, when in reality we would be better off practically letting go. On a motorcycle, as in Jiu-Jitsu, less is more. When I coach my students, I can often be heard saying: “If the entire school could be broken down to just two words it would be, do less.”

So, what exactly does all this mean? How can knowing and understanding more about your bike and your riding technique help us do less? First off, when you understand that relaxing on the motorcycle has many influences on the mechanics of the bike, and on your ability to implement riding techniques, you are better able and driven to make changes.

For example, when you grip the bars tightly, you don’t allow your bike to work the way it was designed to. Bumps and dips in the pavement are felt more intensely, your motorcycle becomes unstable, and overall traction is reduced. This can also cause your bike to take a wider arc through a corner than intended because you are inadvertently counter steering to the outside of the corner, with extra pressure on the outside bar.

Keeping your arms and hands relaxed allows the tyres and suspension to work more effectively by soaking up bumps and imperfections in the road, allowing the motorcycle to hold a more predictable line. Tense arms and a tense back can also prevent you from turning your head to look through the corner, or as far up the road as possible. And, if your arms are straight and tight, then turning the bike quickly for a sharp turn or an emergency manoeuvre becomes near impossible.

A relaxed, almost slouched riding position can open up your field of vision so you can see and react to more of what is going on around you, and having a natural bend in your arms will encourage you to press forward on the bars instead of down, which gets the bike turned quicker. Sometimes, all it takes is a reminder to loosen your grip, a deep breath, and flap of the





WHO'S WRITING?



Misti Hurst is a former AMA Pro 600 road racer, a coach with the California Superbike School Worldwide, a mum of two, and a motorcycle journalist. She lives in Vancouver, Canada with her family and works hard to balance family adventures, skiing, dirt biking, mountain biking, and camping, with motorcycle travel adventures around the world. Some of her favourite experiences so far have been on riding trips in Europe, track days on famous Moto GP circuits, adventure riding in Nepal, and flat track training at the Texas Tornado Bootcamp. Misti's motto is "leap and the net will appear!" You can read all about her adventures around the world at www.mistihurst.com.

arms to relax. However, I understand it can be very difficult to relax, even when you are telling yourselves to do it.

So, what are some causes of being tense on your bike in the first place? Your riding position, where you sit, what you are doing with your legs, and how stable you are with your lower body all play a huge role in how well you can keep your upper body relaxed. You can stabilise your lower body by pinching the tank with one or both knees to get the weight off your arms. Sitting back in the seat also creates space and a natural bend in the arms. Trying to move your body around on your bike too much, such as hanging off the side as you steer, can cause you to tense up because you are trying to do too much at the same time. If you set your body position before you turn into a corner, you give yourself more time and you can remain relaxed.

Also, be aware of factors that can trigger your arms and hands to involuntarily tense up on the bike. Riding above your speed or skill level, or travelling in wet, windy, and other tricky conditions are all examples of these and can trigger a 'death grip' on the bars as your survival instincts kick in and your body tenses up. Sometimes, what helps you stay relaxed in the saddle is simply understanding what causes you to tense up in the first place. Either way, knowing more will help you do less. Next time you're out for a ride, make a point of taking notice of what you are doing in the saddle, such as how your body is positioned and how you hold the bars. Notice what triggers your body to tighten and then see how reducing that tension in your arms, back, and neck improves your overall ride. Breathe deep and most importantly, enjoy the ride. **ABR**



LEGAL

ARE YOU INSURED TO RIDE GREEN LANES?

SHOULD YOU TELL YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY THAT YOU RIDE GREEN LANES, AND ARE YOU COVERED IF YOU HAVE AN ACCIDENT? ABR'S LEGAL EXPERT **ANDREW DALTON** EXPLAINS ALL

You may have noticed that some insurers ask on your proposal form if you ride your motorcycle anywhere other than public roads. This is causing some consternation among those of us who like to take their motorcycles out on Britain's glorious byway network.

If your bike gets muddy, you might refer to unsealed highways as being 'off road', but as a matter of law this is an incorrect definition. Insurers are interested in whether or not your bike goes on track days or is used in enduro competition.

This follows a case called Vnuk from the European Court of Justice which, notwithstanding Brexit, still remains good law in the United Kingdom. The particular facts of Vnuk are not especially exciting, but the outcome means that an insurer is liable for harm which arises from the use of the vehicle in question, and the use of the vehicle is defined very widely. On the back of this, insurers found themselves on the hook for track day incidents.

So, the reason they ask you if you ride your motorcycle anywhere other than public roads is this. If you say no, and you give some other track day junkie a battering with your bike, your insurers are still liable, but because you have said you do not use your motorcycle away from public roads, your insurers can come after any assets you have to reimburse their outlay.

Because insurers are slippery buggers, you need to make sure you get the law right. If you ride green lanes, you are using unsealed highways. A highway in law has four characteristics. The first is that it must be open to the public at large. Secondly, the public can use it by right rather than by permission. Thirdly, it must follow a defined route, and fourthly, the right for the public to use it must be for passage rather than, for example, a village green, which can itself be used for activities such as grazing or for village fetes.

Of course, a byway open to all traffic meets these four



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 rides a KTM 1290 Super Adventure, a Husqvarna 701, and a Husqvarna 350. Andrew has ridden throughout the UK and Europe and is a well-recognised expert in both British and European motorcycle law.

tests. It has been established law since 1932 that a river course which meets these four tests can also be a highway, so the absence of tarmac is neither here nor there as a matter of law. Looking at some of our battered country roads, tarmac seems an optional extra on a number of minor county roads anyway.

In order for a policy of road traffic insurance to be sold in the United Kingdom, it must cover harm or loss to third parties. Long before the European Court of Justice ruled on Vnuk, it was well established in English and Welsh law that cover extends to all areas to which the public have access. Therefore, your bike insurance covers you for riding on unsealed roads which meet the four definitions of a highway set out above. If you go off piste and find yourself on a bridleway, your insurer would have to meet any harm to a third party because it is an area to which the public have access. Of course, there will be a strong presumption of negligence against you for simply being on a bridleway where you have no right to be with your motorcycle, but insurance covers you for negligence.

So, as someone who uses green lanes in England and Wales, I don't need to make a special declaration. When asked if I ride my bike anywhere other than public roads, the answer is no. **ABR**



ASK DAVE

FOR THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE OF *ABR*, OUR RESIDENT EXPERT OF ALL THINGS TWO-WHEELED REVEALS HIS MOST ASKED QUESTION

It certainly doesn't seem like a decade has passed since *ABR* Founder and Publisher Alun and I were chatting about motorcycling when he came up with the idea of starting *Adventure Bike Rider* magazine. What a good idea I thought, and I've been delighted to see *ABR* inspire countless readers to fulfil their adventure biking dreams over the past 10 years.

So, I was honoured to be asked to write the Ask Dave column aimed at helping people to maintain and set up their bikes at home and on the road. I was also a little cautious because I wasn't a journalist, but I did have plenty of experience as a biker and a traveller. It seems to have gone OK so far!

For this 10th anniversary issue of *Adventure Bike Rider*, I thought I would revisit the one question that I've been asked most often over the years, and you may not be surprised to hear it involve the use of tyres.

Q. I use my adventure bike to ride on and off road. What's the best adventure tyre to fit?

Ask a room full of bikers what the best tyre to use is, and I guarantee you'll end up with a multitude of answers. This is because tyre choice is a very personal thing and no single tyre is perfect for every riding situation. The rubber best suited to travelling on a continental road tour through France and Spain isn't going to be much use while blasting across a Moroccan desert, and vice versa.

So, it's important to think about the type of riding you do before you splash out on a new tyre. If you spend the majority of your time riding on the road, yet occasionally stray onto an easy green lane or gravel road in the dry, then a road-biased tyre like Pirelli's Scorpion Trail II will do a decent job. They should also give you many thousands of miles of riding pleasure before wearing out and needing to be replaced.

At the other end of the scale, you'll find more off-road focused adventure bike tyres that are ideal for people who regularly venture onto rugged terrain in changeable weather conditions. Tyres like Bridgestone's Battlax Adventurecross AX41, or Continental's TKC 80, feature aggressive block patterns that provide plenty of grip on loose, sandy, or muddy surfaces, as well as decent road handling. However, those big knobblies will lead to increased noise and vibration on the asphalt, as well as less grip, and they'll wear away more quickly. It's all about compromise.

In the middle of the adventure bike tyre market, you'll find 50/50 rubber like the Mitas E-07. These will feature a less aggressive tread pattern than the likes of the knobbly AX41 or TKC 80, providing a smoother, grippier road ride, while also proving harder wearing. However, the shallow tread pattern won't give you as much grip in wet and muddy conditions on the trails, and you'll also experience some vibration and tyre noise on the road. Which brings us back to that word again, compromise.

Overall, your best bet is to have two sets of tyres, one for road riding and one for when you hit the trails, but in reality, I can't imagine too many people wanting the hassle of changing tyres on a regular basis. This is why adventure tyres designed to take you on and off road have become so popular. Just be sure you think about the type of riding you do before you buy.

Thanks for the many questions you have sent me over the years and please do keep them coming. **ABR**

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*.



MEDICAL

GOLFER'S ELBOW

SUZIE PREVETT EXPLAINS WHY MOTORCYCLISTS ARE PRONE TO DEVELOPING GOLFER'S ELBOW AND DESCRIBES HOW TO RELIEVE THE PAIN

Golfer's elbow is a condition that can cause pain or discomfort on the inside (medial side) of your elbow, but despite the name, golfers aren't the only people to suffer. The condition also causes pain and discomfort for motorcyclists. But what exactly is golfer's elbow, and why can riding a bike cause it?

The condition, also known as Medial Epicondylalgia, causes pain within the large tendon on the inner aspect of your elbow, where all of your flexor muscle tendons converge. Any sudden overloading of your large tendon, say gripping a motorcycle's handlebars too tightly during a day on the trails, can damage your tendons and lead to pain. Riders with desk jobs are at particular risk because their muscles and tendons get a sudden overload when they start riding after being relaxed all week.

The resulting pain from developing golfer's elbow can occur while you undertake certain activities like motorcycling. However, for some people, there may be more of a constant pain which worsens with activity, especially if you're picking up your bike a lot, working on your motorcycle, or holding on for dear life over rugged terrain. You may also feel like your elbow is a little stiffer than normal, or that your grip is weaker. It is important to know whether or not you definitely have this condition prior to starting exercises, so it is recommended to seek a physiotherapy assessment first or see your doctor.

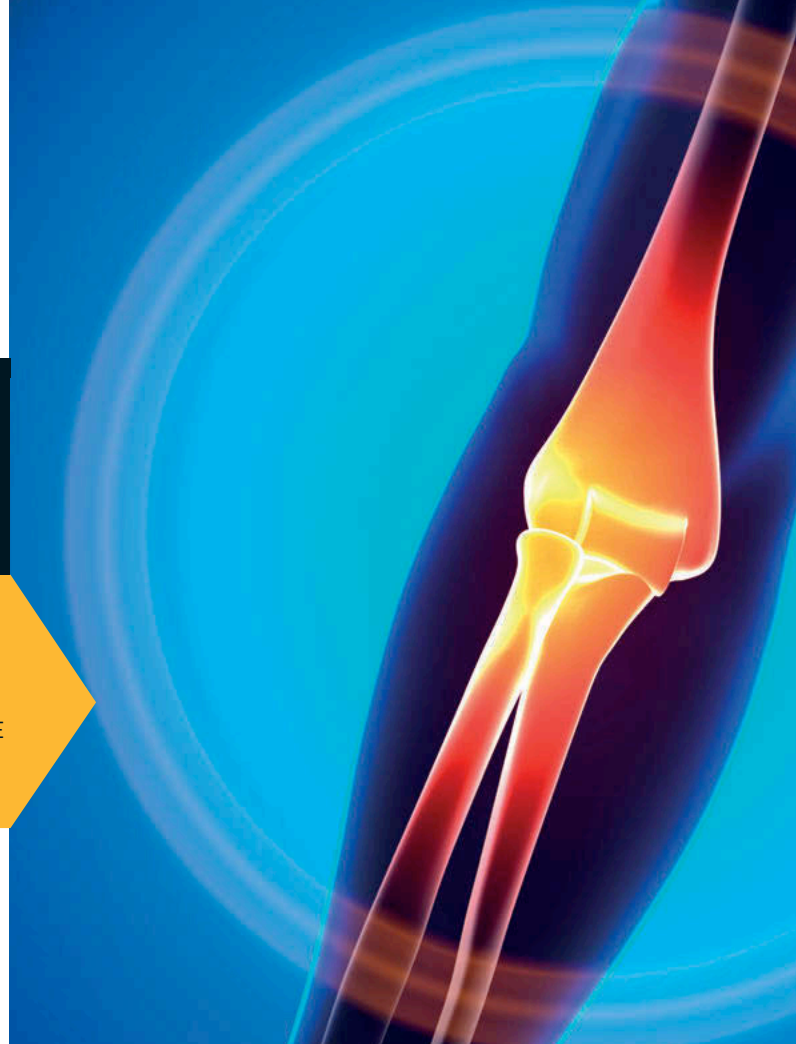
In the majority of people, golfer's elbow will slowly improve, although recovery may take from several weeks to several months. Smoking and type 2 diabetes make you more susceptible. You can help aid your recovery by doing the following:

ACTIVITY MODIFICATION

Adjust your daily activities to reduce discomfort in your elbow. You don't have to stop doing all your normal activities, just try to modify them and take regular breaks. If you're experiencing increased pain for over an hour after activity, especially the next day, this is an indication that you are doing too much and you need to adjust your activity.

COLD THERAPY

Try using an ice pack on the affected area to help reduce the pain. You can use a bag of frozen peas (or similar) for approximately 10 minutes, a maximum of every two hours. Make sure you cover the



bag in a damp cloth and check your skin regularly. It's important not to use ice if you have circulation problems, damaged skin, or altered sensation in the area.

MEDICATION

Your doctor may prescribe medication to help you manage the pain, and pharmacists can also give good advice. Let them know if you're on other medications.

ELBOW STRAP / BRACE

These can help unload the tendon during activity. Normally these should be placed approximately 2cm down your forearm from your medial epicondyle, however each strap will come with specific instructions.

EXERCISE 1

Static (isometric) exercise

Start with this exercise only if you're elbow is quite irritable and easily aggravated by activity. You can use a light dumbbell (0.5–1kg) or other light-weighted household object to do this exercise.

Hold the weight as pictured with your elbow bent and arm resting on a stable surface. Hold this position for 30–60 seconds. Repeat this 3–5 times with a two-minute rest in between each hold, once a day.

If you are managing the static exercise without any issues, you can progress by increasing the weight a little and/or by undertaking the exercise with your elbow in a less flexed (bent) position, as shown above. Gradually reduce the amount of bend you have in your elbow over several sessions rather than changing the position significantly in one session. Repeat this 3–5 times with a two-minute rest in between each hold, once a day. If you are managing well with this exercise you can add exercise two to your program.

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 registered physiotherapist with more than 10 years of experience, and is also a certified health coach, nutritional therapist and clinical weight loss practitioner. She has a BSc in Sport Science and Management, a MSc in Physiotherapy (pre-reg) and is passionate about health promotion, injury prevention, and the impact of lifestyle factors on health. You can find out more about her travels at www.AvVida.co.uk.

EXERCISE 2

Flexor strengthening exercise

If your pain is low and less irritable, then you can add in this exercise to your rehabilitation immediately. Again, you can use a light weight or any other light-weighted household object to carry out this exercise.

Hold the light weight. Bend the wrist up slowly, as far as comfortable, over approximately four seconds and then lower slowly over approximately four seconds. Complete 10–15 repetitions of this and then rest for two minutes. Repeat this 2–3 times, once a day.

This exercise can be progressed by increasing the weight a little and/or by undertaking the exercise with your elbow in a less flexed (bent) position, as shown in the previous exercise. Gradually reduce the amount of bend you have in your elbow over several sessions rather than changing the position significantly in one session.

Mild discomfort during exercise is acceptable, however if you are experience higher pain levels, particularly for over an hour after the exercises or activity, or worsening the following day, then you may need to reduce the exercise to a more tolerable level.

These exercises often need to be undertaken on a regular basis for a minimum of 3–4 months. Some people do not experience significant improvements within the first six weeks. For a full reference list, please contact Suzie on suzanna@motivatedhealth.com

*Disclaimer: This article is intended to be for educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice or replace professional assessment. Please seek a professional assessment before undertaking a new exercise program, especially if you have any medical conditions, any previous injuries or other health/physical concerns. If you undertake any of the exercises within this article you do so at your own risk. **ABR***

STATIC ISOMETRIC
HOLD START, ARM EXTENDED

STATIC ISOMETRIC HOLD
PROGRESSION, ARM EXTENDED

FLEXOR STRENGTHENING,
FLEXED POSITION, START

FLEXOR STRENGTHENING,
EXTENDED POSITION, START

FLEXOR STRENGTHENING, FLEXED
POSITION PROGRESSION, ARM EXTENDED

FLEXOR STRENGTHENING, EXTENDED
POSITION PROGRESSION, ARM EXTENDED

RIDE THE ABR WELSH SUPER 10

Ollie Rooke takes on the *ABR* Welsh Super 10 challenge to ride the country's 10 highest mountain roads, which all stand at over 500m tall, in 24 hours

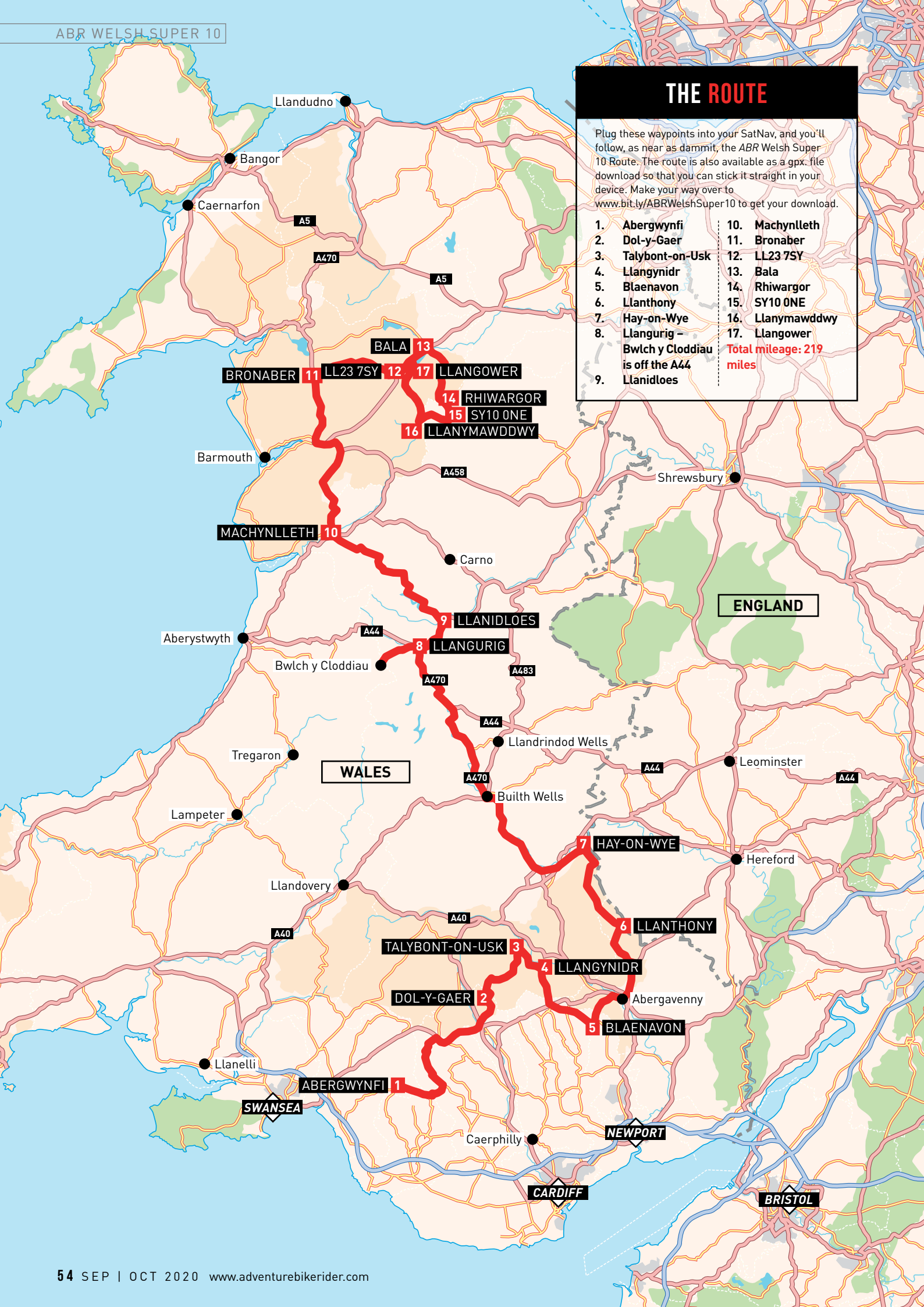


THE ROUTE

Plug these waypoints into your SatNav, and you'll follow, as near as dammit, the ABR Welsh Super 10 Route. The route is also available as a gpx file download so that you can stick it straight in your device. Make your way over to www.bit.ly/ABRWelshSuper10 to get your download.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Abergwynfi | 10. Machynlleth |
| 2. Dol-y-Gaer | 11. Bronaber |
| 3. Talybont-on-Usk | 12. LL23 7SY |
| 4. Llangynidr | 13. Bala |
| 5. Blaenavon | 14. Rhiwargor |
| 6. Llanthony | 15. SY10 0NE |
| 7. Hay-on-Wye | 16. Llanymawddwy |
| 8. Llangurig -
Bwlch y Cloddiau
is off the A44 | 17. Llangower |
| 9. Llanidloes | |

Total mileage: 219 miles





JAMES AND OLLIE WARM
UP FOR THE RIDE WITH A COFFEE



CRUISING ALONG
THE RHIGOS MOUNTAIN ROAD



CARVING THROUGH
THE BRECON BEACONS



TICKING OFF
THE MOUNTAIN ROADS

While *Adventure Bike Rider* is based in the Midlands, there's no denying that its soul lies further west in Wales. Not only is it the birthplace of ABR Founder and Publisher Alun Davies, but it's home to some of the best UK riding an adventure biker could hope to discover.

A rugged coastline gives way to a vast mountainous landscape that stretches as far as the eye can see, while long, meandering roads wiggle across stunning scenery following the contours of the hills and valleys. For motorcyclists looking to explore the world on two wheels, these ribbons of tarmac offer a perfect mix of road riding at its best, offering sweeping bends that give way to tight single-track lanes, before climbing to lofty heights along mountain passes.

THE CHALLENGE

It was those mountain passes that inspired us to create the Welsh Super 10. On one unseasonably rainy day in August, the ABR editorial team had gathered in the office with one clear goal in mind. We wanted to create an epic ride that would pay homage to 10 years of *Adventure Bike Rider* magazine. It had to be something big, something that would compete with the very best British motorcycle routes while also giving you guys a challenge. It was a tough ask which left us scratching our heads until Editor Bryn, who's name fittingly translates to hill in Welsh, had a brainwave. Like a man possessed, he scribbled out a route on a map as we watched on, before he held it up for all to see. The ABR Welsh Super 10 was born.

In fact, the route created so much excitement that Bryn and Assistant Editor James decided to join me in taking on the challenge. So, bright and early one sunny morning, we belted up the motorway from the ABR offices in Stratford upon Avon and took on the ABR Welsh Super 10 for ourselves, with James riding the Ducati Multistrada 1260 GT, Bryn on the BMW S 1000 XR, and myself on the Honda Africa Twin Adventure Sports.

The premise of the route is simple. Wales boasts 10 epic mountain roads that sit above 500m and the ABR Welsh Super 10 sets you the challenge of riding them all in 24 hours. The route itself is 219 miles long but don't let the (relatively) low mileage fool you. The nature of the roads on offer, often tricky single-tracks and winding, narrow passes, guarantees a full-blooded riding challenge. All things considered, with lunch, fuel and photo stops taken into account, you should expect it to take around 12 hours to complete. So, let's get started...

THE ROUTE

Starting bright and early in Abergwynfi, we quickly tick off the first of Wales' 10 highest roads, taking in the highest A road, the A4107. The succession of long sweeping turns and magnificent hairpins top out at 527m, placing it fifth on our list. It drops down into the Rhondda Valley, just a stone's throw from the birthplace of Alun himself. There's no time to pause though as we quickly tick off another road on our list, the Rhigos mountain road which is the tenth highest on our list. It features some fun tight bends and proves a great warm up for what's to come. The road also opens up to a breath-taking view of the Brecon Beacons in the distance, with a layby by the side of the road providing the perfect opportunity to pull over and take it all in. Those who arrive a bit later in the day may be joined by an ice cream van which inspired Bryn's childhood nickname for the road, ice cream mountain.

Moving on, we drop down into the neighbouring valley by way of some tight hairpins as we head in the direction of the

Brecon Beacons. We dip into the National Park and ride a series of narrow lanes that hide in the shadow of Pen y Fan before reaching the village of Talybont-on-Usk. We then head towards the magnificent Llangyidr mountain road which is the sixth highest of the challenge.

Once again, Wales delivers yet another jaw-dropping pass. Gliding along silky-smooth tarmac, we find ourselves stealing glances at the countryside dropping away to our left as we climb up the mountain to a height of 518m. As with all the roads featured in the challenge, it's one to take at a relaxed pace so you can savour the views and keep a watchful eye out for the sheep and wild horses that occasionally stray onto the road.

Next up is the Bloreng, which sits just 6m lower than the previous road. It's slightly wider and designed to accommodate more traffic than some of the other roads on the list, which gives us an opportunity to twist the throttle and enjoy some sumptuous twisties. However, ensure you take a moment to soak up the views at 512m above sea level, but don't take too long. This is a challenge after all!

We now head in the direction of the highest road in the challenge, the famous Gospel Pass. Approaching from the south, we navigate a warren of narrow single-track roads that barely have room for two bikes to pass, let alone cars. However, navigating this network of nadgery lanes is worth it when you crest the peak of the hill at 549m and a panoramic view of Wales unfurls before your eyes. This point marks the highest point of the Gospel Pass and it's a scene you'll want to stop to savour before continuing on down the other side of the pass, before navigating yet more tight lanes to Hay-on-Wye. The town is world renowned for its book festival and the perfect spot for lunch as it marks the halfway point of the challenge.

After filling your belly, we take the road north and, after a morning exploring slower roads, we pick up the pace as we approach our next road, the Bwlch y Cloddiau. Occupying third place on our list of highest roads, it's actually a dead end but don't let this deter you from exploring its length. Cutting through remote moorland with only the rolling hills and a smattering of sheep for company, it's easy to feel like you're the only person on earth. If you're riding this route without the GPX file it can be tricky to find. From Llangurig, take the A44 heading west out of the village before taking the first left turn as the road bends away to the right. Keep right as the road forks and it will quickly climb into the hills. We turn around when we reach the gate at the end of the road and head back to re-join the main road in the direction of Llanidloes and the Rhiw Fawr. It's another cracking road on our list which also allows us to make swifter progress through the middle of Wales as we head towards the final section of the challenge.

Next up is the Dol-y-Moch which stretches off into the distance as it snakes through vast swathes of empty Welsh countryside. Once again it takes us through a stunning landscape where you're unlikely to see another living being other than those with four legs and trotters. We loop around the vast Bala Lake before ascending Cwm Hirnant, which tops out at 507m, making it the ninth highest road on our list. Finally, we ride along North Wales' second highest paved road, the Bwlch y Groes, which offers more stunning views of rolling hills and valleys, before we drop down to the peaceful banks of Bala Lake where the ABR Welsh Super 10 and a fantastic day in the saddle ends.

If you take on the ABR Welsh Super 10, I'd love to know how you got on, so please do send me an email with photos and stories from the road. Send them to ollie@adventurebikerider.com. **ABR**



VIEWS OF THE
BLORENG MOUNTAIN ROAD



A SILKY
RIBBON OF TARMAC



GLORIOUS VIEWS
ALONG THE GOSPEL PASS



THE ROAD TO LAKE BALA



BRIDGESTONE

BATTLAX ADVENTURECROSS **AX41**



**Biker's
Club**

"The tyres have been designed to offer a great combination of on and off road performance, and they certainly got their share of both on our recent Wales Coast to Coast ride. I was pleasantly surprised by just how well the knobbles perform on the tarmac, offering a reassuring amount of grip in corners and feeling planted and stable at higher speeds (even two-up). Away from the road, they were sure-footed and confidence inspiring. We've put around 3,000 miles into our set, and there's still life in the rubber yet!"

Bryn Davies, Editor at Adventure Bike Rider Magazine

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BRIDGESTONE

THE GREAT ESCAPE

DAVID JORDAN follows in daring and heroic footsteps as he visits some of the most iconic locations of WWII in Europe, including Colditz Castle and Stalag Luft III



WHO'S WRITING?



David has ridden extensively throughout Europe for more than 30 years, both as a group leader and a solo rider. Never one to shy away from a challenge, he once rode a 98cc Yamaha RXS 100 from the UK to Istanbul and back to raise money for charity and gain publicity for a local riding school.

After working as dispatch rider, and later as a motorcycle riding instructor, David joined Triumph Motorcycles as a road tester, clocking up more than 800,000 miles during a nine-year period, before coming in from the cold to join his brother in the PR business. He now works as a full-time writer and PR consultant for the international relocation industry.

M

ost of us know the Hollywood version of the mass breakout from Stalag Luft III. After all, if you live in the UK, you'll have watched *The Great Escape* repeated on TV almost every Christmas. But, although the 1963 film made compulsive viewing, the real story was a little different. For a start, no Americans took part in the escape and there were certainly no Triumph motorcycles around for Steve McQueen to jump a barbed-wire fence. However, what is true is that of the 76 men who escaped on the freezing night of 24 March 1944, only three made it back to England and, on Hitler's orders, 50 of those recaptured were shot in the head by the Gestapo and their ashes returned to the camp to deter others. A sobering thought.

For men of a certain age, like my mate Robin and I, WWII holds a particular fascination. During our childhood, the memory of war was still fresh in the minds of our parents and their stories of conflict. Bombing raids and sacrifice, witnessed at first hand, painted vivid pictures of the reality of war and made us thankful we were not born 20 years earlier. Both Robin and I worked as apprentices in the aircraft industry during the 1960s and many of the men we worked with served in the RAF as ground engineers and, in some cases, air crew in raids over enemy territory. At the time, we saw them just as silly old men but now we realise we'd been privileged to work with silent heroes who had risked their lives to defend our country and experienced things we can only imagine. It was against this backdrop we decided to visit some of the places forever associated with the men and women of the RAF and still bear witness to the heartbreak and heroism of those dark days of war.

As the sun set over Harwich International Port on the east of England, we boarded the *Stena Hollandica* for our overnight crossing of the North Sea. It's 550 miles from the Hook of Holland to the Polish border and another 50 or so to the town of Zagan where the remains of Stalag Luft III are located. We decided to take it easy on the outward leg, taking three days to allow time to visit the Möhne dam (of *Dambusters* fame) and the infamous Colditz Castle where RAF officers, including Sir Douglas Bader and escapee Airey Neave, ►

were among its most celebrated inmates. My BMW F 700 GS and Robin's 1993 BMW R 100 R had run perfectly during our journey from Northamptonshire despite heavy rain and walls of spray thrown up by speeding cars and trucks on the German autobhans (never forget your waterproofs).

The Möhne Dam lies about 10 miles south of the German town of Soest. We parked the bikes in the pay and display car park and, after scoffing a couple of Bratwursts and a coffee (I never drink tea abroad) from one of the many wooden stalls, we took a walk along the parapet of the dam. The Möhne Dam is now a popular place for locals to bring their families for picnics, but on the night of 16 May 1943, the Lancaster bombers of 617 Squadron led by 24-year-old Guy Gibson breached the dam using specially designed bouncing-bombs, causing severe disruption to the industrial heartland of the Ruhr region and the deaths of hundreds of people caught up in the torrent of water that followed. Eight aircraft were lost with 53 crew members killed and a further three captured and tortured by the Gestapo. It was the first and only time the bouncing bomb was used during the war.

It was time to get back on the road. As we left the Möhne, the first tell-tale spots of rain appeared on my visor. We were going to get a ducking again. As we searched for our hotel in the nearby town of Kassel, I made a wrong turn and found myself heading straight for an oncoming tram! In a panic, I swung the GS at a steep angle across the slippery steel tracks to avoid a head-on crash. Whether it was fatigue caused by the incessant rain or just inattention, I don't know, but it was a scary moment and a good excuse for a stiff drink when we finally arrived.

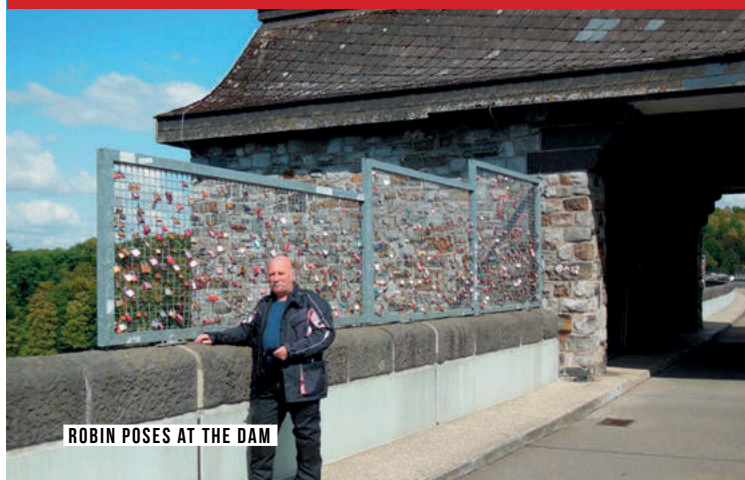
The next morning the rain had finally stopped and, after checking the bikes, we headed for our next WWII destination, Colditz. Colditz Castle, or Schloss Colditz in German was known as Oflag IV-C during WWII. It was a prisoner of war camp for 'incorrigible' Allied officers who had repeatedly escaped from other camps. During the 1970s, a popular British TV series told stories of life in the camp and the many attempts its reluctant inmates made to escape. As Colditz is located in what was then East Germany and behind the Iron Curtain, the series was actually shot at Sterling Castle in Scotland, nevertheless it was pretty convincing at the time.

Even today, Colditz is a remote part of Germany and perhaps not surprisingly, very much off the tourist track. Finding a hotel or even somewhere decent to eat is not easy so, if you want to stay here, it's best to book first but we didn't. After squelching around the town for an hour or so (yes it was raining again), we eventually found the Pension Zur Alten Stadtmauer. It was run by a man best described as a German version of Basil Fawlty. Actually, he was a nice guy and made us very welcome.

After changing into dry clothes, we climbed the steps to visit the famous castle and bought a ticket for the official tour. We were the only two customers. Our guide, a Polish man with a strong Yorkshire accent (he apparently lived in Barnsley for many years) showed us around the deserted castle. It's a fascinating place with a history that stretches back many hundreds of years, but it was WWII and the RAF we were most interested in. Our Polish guide (whose name I can't pronounce let alone spell) told us some of the many stories of daring escape attempts including the famous glider nicknamed Colditz Cock that prisoners built in the loft of the castle, apparently without the knowledge of the German guards. The idea was to launch the flimsy aircraft off the roof and fly as far away from the castle as possible to make good their escape. It was never used, and no one knows what happened to the original, but there's a full-size replica on display and lots more ingenious artefacts, including a home-made radio and brilliantly forged fake ID papers, in the castle's museum.



THE MÖHNE DAM



ROBIN POSES AT THE DAM



COLDITZ CASTLE

AN ESCAPE TUNNEL
IN COLDITZ CASTLE

WANT TO RIDE TO STALAG LUFT III?

Depending on the route, it's around 700 miles to the camp from Calais although we chose the shorter route taking the ferry crossing from Harwich to the Hook of Holland with Stena Line. We paid around £400 return for the two of us including a mandatory cabin. The Dover to Calais crossing by ship or tunnel is cheaper at around £100 each. We used budget hotels for our five overnight stays at an average price of about €60 (around £54) per room. We didn't book in advance to give us more flexibility but finding accommodation was generally easy.

The weather in central Europe tends to be very hot in high-summer and bitterly cold in winter, so I would recommend planning your trip for either the spring or early autumn. We travelled in September. Whenever you go, it will probably rain at some point, so make sure you're well prepared.

That evening our search for a cosy bar with log fires, hearty food and locally crafted beer were sadly in vain. An Italian ice cream parlour about to close and a Chinese takeaway were all we could find in the gloomy town square that Monday night. There was no one around to ask, but eventually we spotted a filling station with a café frequented by local teenagers riding noisy mopeds. It was not very prepossessing but by now we were desperate. The Turkish man behind the counter smiled a cheroot-stained smile and pointed to the whiteboard menu hanging on the wall, clumsily written in red felt pen. We both went for number six, not having the remotest idea what we'd ordered. Ten minutes later we were tucking into one of the best chicken dinners we'd had in a long time, all washed down with a complimentary bottle of German beer. How quickly we judge.

The countryside around Colditz is stunning. As we rode out of the town heading east towards Poland, a pair of deer sprinted across the field in front of us and in a flash disappeared into the forest. Despite all the things we saw on our trip, the site of those wild deer running freely on that dewy, misty September morning will stay with me forever. Before leaving England, we'd been warned by 'expert travellers' that Polish roads were terrible and the police delighted in frog marching motorcyclists to the nearest cash machine for the most trivial traffic offences. The first rule of motorcycle travel should be never believe what people tell you. As we approached the border at Görlitz, I checked the GS's mirror to make sure Robin's headlight was still behind me, mentally preparing for the inevitable interrogation by the fearsome border police. I was pleasantly surprised as we passed the blue EU Polska sign on the autobahn and crossed into Poland at 75mph without so much as a glance from the two cops busy drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes outside the now abandoned border post. How things have changed.

It took less than an hour to reach Zagan on the super-smooth, empty motorway and we headed for the nearest bank to get some Zlotys to pay for a traditional Polish lunch and fill up with petrol for around £1 a litre. The old prisoner of war camp is about half a mile south of the town centre. Take the road past the big Tesco store and look out for the Stalag Luft III signs on the left. There are three main sites to visit, the first is the cemetery where the remains of the 50 officers shot by the Gestapo were buried. The second is the camp itself, and the third has a museum where you can see artefacts from the camp and explore a full-size replica of Hut 104 where the escape tunnel 'Harry' began.

The unmade road to the camp is unchanged since the war and the loose uneven surface needs care to negotiate. After about half a mile on the right, there's a reconstructed wooden lookout tower and, on the left, a memorial marking the exit to Harry which to the dismay of the escapees emerged a few meters short of the tree line ▶



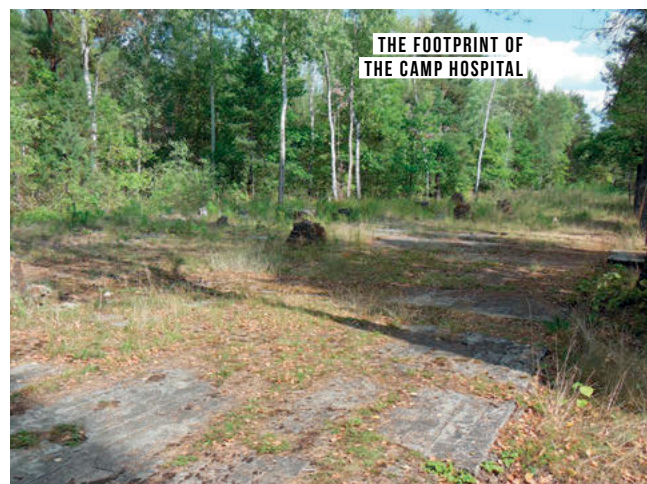
A CUT OUT OF COLDITZ
ESCAPEE AIREY NEAVE



DAVID AT STALAG LUFT III



A MEMORIAL
TO THE ESCAPEES

AN EXIT FROM
AN ESCAPE TUNNELREMAINS OF THE
PUNISHMENT CELLSTHE CEMETERY
NEXT TO THE CAMPTHE FOOTPRINT OF
THE CAMP HOSPITAL

in full view of the Goons. The prisoners of war (POWs) mockingly called the German guards Goons who were apparently willingly accepted the nickname after being told that it stood for German Officer Or Non-Com.

The route of the tunnel has been marked on the surface and can be seen stretching 102m to the foundations of Hut 104. Harry was one of three tunnels dug by the escapees. The others, Tom and Dick were discovered by the Germans and destroyed. It is thought that around 200 tunnels were dug by POWs during the life of the camp.

Unlike most historic sites, there are no restrictions for visitors and we were able to wonder around freely, trying to imagine how the camp would have looked back in 1944. The concrete floors of the punishment cells (coolers), where prisoners were put in solitary confinement for misdemeanours, are clearly visible. Men would often spend weeks in there on reduced rations, probably dreaming of home and wondering when the war would end.

Opposite the cells are the remains of the hospital building with slimy overgrown steps leading down to the half-open door of the cellar. We couldn't resist the temptation to look inside. At first there was nothing to see, only blackness and the smell of decay. As our eyes adjusted, a long corridor emerged from the gloom and we ventured further inside. Dark rooms probably used for storing medicines and equipment, now dripping with water, lined the passageway. It was spooky. We'd seen enough and, with a shiver rippling down our spines, we scampered back up the steps into the warm late summer sunshine.

It was time to head for home. We'd already covered more than 800 miles on our trip so far and we needed to be back at the Hook of Holland to board a ferry in a little over two days' time. It had been a great journey so far and a great escape (sorry) from the routine of everyday life. However, seeing Stalag Luft III and the other sites we visited at first hand brings home the reality of war and the evil it breeds in otherwise civilised people. Sadly, it seems we never learn. **ABR**

THE BIKES

The two BMWs we used for the trip couldn't have been more different. Robin rode his 1993 R 100, while I used a 2015 F 700 GS. Both bikes performed well and we were able to cruise comfortably at 80mph on the German Autobahns, although Robin found the fully-laden R 100 tended to become a little unstable at anything faster. The GS however, even with a large top box and panniers, remained rock steady, even on windy stretches.

Fuel consumption was surprisingly similar for both bikes at around 60mpg for the R 100 and about 65mpg for the GS. Both could easily cover 200 miles between fuel stops. A word of caution: Fuel stops on German Autobahns can be a long way apart, so fill up early to avoid getting caught out. Running out of petrol on a motorway anywhere in the world is expensive, but in Germany you could also get a fine if the Autobahnpolizei spot you.

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THE ROUGH SIDE OF SILK

SIMON THOMAS and his wife Lisa immerse themselves in 3,000 years of history as they follow the ancient Silk Route along the infamous Pamir Highway



WHO'S WRITING?

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

S

ince time immemorial, the Silk Route in Central Asia has existed as an artery of trade connecting west to east, and north to south. Contrary to its name, the Silk Route is not a singular road but a web of ancient tracks and rock-strewn trails trodden for millennia by travelers, merchants, explorers, soldiers, and

kings. Over 3,000 years of meandering history is carved into one of the most striking landscapes in the world. Our dream of riding the Silk Route is now a reality, and we must ride it successfully if we are to reach Iran and continue our westward journey.

We wake in Kochkor-Ata, a small village northwest of Jalal-Abad in Kyrgyzstan. We're sitting cross-legged around a tattered Persian rug joined by 10 or so construction workers, each covered in paint, mud, and sawdust, watching us intently as we munch on mouthfuls of stale bread and pieces of fruit. The smell of concrete hangs in the air. We pay our bill for last night's accommodation in their locked compound by handing over two pirated DVDs we'd picked up in central Russia. It's great when you realise that money isn't the only currency when you travel.

The Siberian town of Novosibirsk, where we collected our Kazakh visas three weeks earlier, is but a fuzzy memory. We now only remember Kazakhstan as a blur, with fragile recollections of paperwork, more visa applications, and nights spent in old mental asylums now posing as soiled motels. It's midday as we ride south-east around the low-lying Fergana Mountains before turning south west and entering the ancient Kyrgyz city of Osh. Market stalls spill their wares into the streets, selling all manner of items from torches to goat heads. A few domed mosques dot the city skyline making the scene feel familiar, almost Moroccan. Hidden from view inside a small café, we devour a bowl of rice flavoured with the ubiquitous mutton fat. As we eat, locals stop, stare, and finally crack huge smiles as they walk past the parked bikes.

THE TEETH OF THE PAMIRS

Back on the bikes after lunch, Lisa's BMW F 650 GS thumps a steady rhythm as we pick up speed on serpentine tar that stretches out below us. The Pamir Highway (M41) disappears from view and reappears as it snakes its way between layers of orange and caramel mountainsides. In the distance, the teeth of the Pamir Mountains rake the sky. My GPS lists our destination as Sary-Tash, a small village on the Kazakh-Tajik border, and we need to press on if we are to cross the Taldyk mountain pass before nightfall.

With investment from China, the length of the lower M41 is being torn up and replaced. It'll be a delight in a year but right now it's a nightmare. Standing up on the pegs for better control over the mixture of tumbling large rocks and loose soil, we round a wide bend, our progress brought to a sudden halt as a half-hearted ▶

A REMOTE
AND WILD LANDTIME TO PUT
ON OUR THERMALS

flag bearer waives us to a stop. The scene down in the lower valley through which we are about to cross looks decidedly post-apocalyptic. Dozens of eight-wheeled, rolling metal giants belch diesel fumes into the sky as they claw and tear at the mountainsides. We choke on the thick clouds of dust these monsters produce as we become stuck behind two of them as they rumble through a long, narrow gorge. With a deep breath and fingers crossed, we plunge into the airborne debris and emerge safely on the other side. We are instantly transported back to northern Argentina, the landscape painted in shades of yellow and tangerine red, the tall peaks of the Alay Mountains in the distance brought out in sharp relief by the royal blue sky.

Perched atop the Taldyk Pass at 12,000ft, we gulp down the thin air and watch the panorama bathed in a translucent mauve. Night is coming fast. Looking out across the Alay Valley, we watch the lights of a distant village twinkle to life as small generators kick into nightly action. The temperature has plummeted to -9°C , and the snow-fringed track and slippery switchbacks tug on our already frayed concentration as we work our way down the backside of the pass toward the sanctuary of the village below. On an unlit path in Sary-Tash, I suddenly barrel into a deep water crossing and barely stay upright before pulling up outside a small homestay where we peel our stiff bodies from the frozen bikes. Exhausted and wet, we settle down in a whitewashed room lit by a single candle. We can barely move inside our sleeping bags under the weight of half a dozen old rugs for warmth and soon fall into an exhausted sleep.

LISA ON HER
BMW F 650 GS

The next day, wearing as many layers as we can find, we head for the Tajikistan border. We ride the short two-mile track to the base of the Alay mountain range, the route ahead indistinguishable among the vast slabs of rock and thick, snow-covered ground. Inside the small border compound, we complete the exit paperwork and steel ourselves against the plummeting temperature outside. Soon the patchy tarmac turns to red clay as we climb in altitude in second and third gear. We'd read countless stories of the severe weather in this region, even in summer, and here we are with winter closing in around us, literally. We are giving this range the full respect it's due. Two tired Brits without cell or satellite phones could easily get in trouble up here but it's impossible not to feel the thrill of adventure.

KALASHNIKOVs AND TOENAILS

We crest a rise and the Tajikistan border compound comes into sight. Two large rusting fuel tankers rest in the red mire and are now in active duty as the passport offices. Half a dozen young (and presumably bored) soldiers, Kalashnikovs slung over their shoulders, saunter outside. Inside the cramped room the scene is bizarre. By some miracle, a set of bunk beds is squeezed in, occupied by a guard who sets about our paperwork while only wearing his stained thermals. The longest set of yellow toenails I've ever seen stick out of the holes in his woollen socks. A TV hisses in the corner and a smoky iron furnace belts out a bit of welcome heat. With the border crossing complete, we head off once again and pull along—



ROCKFALLS CREATE
HAZARDS ON THE ROAD



WINTER IS
CLOSING IN



TOWERING MOUNTAINS
ALONG THE PAMIR HIGHWAY



A ROUTE TRAVELLED
FOR 3,000 YEARS

side Lake Karakul some two hours later, the highest lake in Central Asia. At 3,900m, the vista is nothing short of spectacular, the lofty silence only broken by the dark, icy waters lapping the shore. The unexpected sight of a lone bicyclist coming toward us is reason enough to pause. The cyclist pulls up alongside us and introduces himself as Ben from the UK. He looks as exhausted as we surely feel and describes the conditions ahead as “tough.” We realise we aren’t going to cross the 4,600m pass ahead of us before nightfall.

A quick scan of the small dusty village to our west reveals a hand-painted sign that reads ‘home stay’ and, as we look at the towering mountains behind us casting long shadows across the landscape, we quickly make up our minds. The three of us cross the hard ice and at last park in a cramped yard. Inside is a simple room where a low fire sits in a grate waiting to be stoked. We sit around a table sipping on sweet, warm tea and swap information about each other’s upcoming journeys, as night falls outside.

In the morning, a thick layer of frost covers both bikes, making them glisten in the pristine morning air. Straining our eyes, we watch Ben become a speck on the northern horizon as we head south and we begin our own steady climb to the Ak-Baital Pass. We rise from the plains too quickly, without the chance to acclimatise. At 4,000m, waves of nausea hit Lisa along with a pounding head. She’s showing signs of altitude sickness, which is a deadly concern in this remote location. Our fastest way down is up and over so we have to push on. It’s -22C and to our left a seemingly endless fence of wooden posts and barbed wire marks the Chinese border.

ACUTE MOUNTAIN SICKNESS

At 4,500m, the switchbacks require more concentration. We’re up on the pegs and riding over ice-encrusted muddy streams and loose rock. The snow drifts across the track, an addition we could well do without. Even with sunglasses and dark visors, the glare from the snow is painful. This is truly a giant’s playground and we are just specks passing through. It’s a humbling experience. Our progress is halted two miles from the summit, the thinning dark trail we have been following now lost under deep snow. Lisa is feeling worse and I haven’t told her that her lips are now dark blue and her eyes have the sunken look of the oxygen deprived. From over my shoulder, the coughs of an ancient Russian 4x4 grabs my attention and I wave it down explaining: “My wife is unwell!” Without question, the driver agrees to carry Lisa to the top of the pass, leaving me with the two bikes. I ride mine to the top and walk back for Lisa’s. We stop only for the briefest of moments at the summit of the pass to take in the view before riding downwards along dusty roads as the late afternoon rolls by. The reduction in elevation of 1,000m has improved Lisa’s altitude sickness enough that we know we are out of the woods.

The town of Murghab is our chance to feel some welcome warmth. This is the highest town in Tajikistan at 3,700 metres just below the altitude Lisa needs for any kind of overnight stay. Heading down to a little bazaar, we are in search of water and somewhere to exchange dollars for Tajik somoni, the local currency. Dozens of small stalls line a single street. Some are wooden but most are ►

WANT TO RIDE THE PAMIR HIGHWAY?

The Pamir Highway, or M41, runs through Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. It is the only continuous route through the mountains, ascending to 4,654m as it summits Ak-Baital Pass, the second-highest international highway in the world. Russian is still widely used and understood, but the Tajik people speak Tajik, a dialect of Persian. The majority of this area stands at over 4,000m so take time to acclimatise to the high altitude. The currency of Tajikistan is the somoni (som). US dollars are easily exchanged in banks and exchange offices. Most transactions in the Pamirs will be in cash.

VISAS

UK citizens require a valid passport and visa which must be obtained in advance. A GBAO permit is required for travel to the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast area of the Pamirs. This must be specifically requested in your application. These areas are Khorog, Murghab, Darwaz, Ishkashim, Vanj, Rushan. This permit will be checked at checkpoints on the road and in Khorog and Murghab.

FOOD AND LODGING

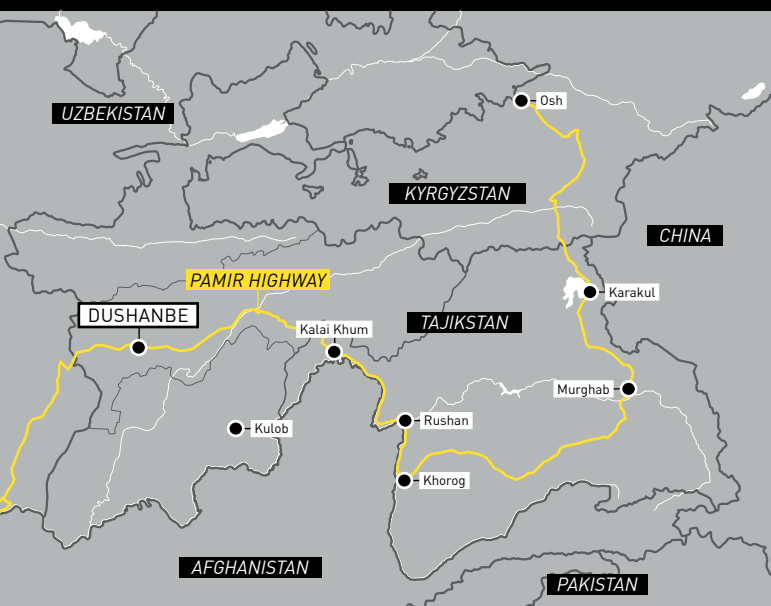
Sanitary conditions are basic in rural areas. Be prepared for no hot or running water and primitive (squat) toilets, especially if staying in private homes in villages. The staple diet in the mountains is Pamiri tea (sheer-chai), coffee, vodka, and yak milk, with meals usually consisting of rice, eggs, mutton, and, if you're lucky, freshly made warm bread called non with yak butter. Most villages on the Pamir Highway have homestays. Built in the traditional Pamiri style and constructed of wood with five pillars, a sky light, and richly decorated with carpets, they provide great hospitality and simple but delicious meals. Prices range from £3.50 (no food) to £9.50 per person per night including dinner and breakfast.

ROADS AND BIKING

Distance is deceiving. Allow a minimum of five days to ride from Osh to Dushanbe. The road is partially paved but is mostly unpaved and heavily damaged in places by erosion, earthquakes, and landslides. In spring and early summer, there are risks of roads being blocked by mudslides. In winter, the high passes are closed by snow. The best time to travel is July to October.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Up to date information on visa requirements and travel advice is available at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice. For information about travelling to Tajikistan go to www.tajiktourism.com



rust-ravaged shipping containers or the rear carcasses of 4x4s. As we walk the bazaar, we see that the few vendors braving the cold stock little more than a ramshackle mix of old clothes and out of date Snickers bars. A lonely bottle of toxic-coloured shampoo sitting on a wooden plank is the highlight of our shopping experience.

DUSTY SANCTUARY ON THE SILK ROAD

Murghab's dusty streets are now two days behind us. We are in the Pamir Mountains proper, riding Tibet-like high plateaus and wide, remote valleys. Bolivia was the last time we'd ridden this high and felt so utterly separated from the rest of the world. The Chinese call this range the Congling Shan or Onion Mountains, and we can see why. We are not riding a single mountain range but rather a labyrinth of layers of differing ranges, each larger than the next. By mid-afternoon we're racing a snowstorm across the Alichur Plain that has pushed in from the south. A wall of freezing air and heavy snow threatens to catch us before our route takes a westerly course.

As the afternoon disappears, we summit the Koi-Tezek Pass at 4,297m and are painfully aware at just how cold we've become. Our concentration wanders and wanes. On the western side of Khorog, we fill our bikes to the brim with fuel. Our aim is to reach the capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, more than 300 miles away by the end of the day but it's a tall order. By midmorning our definition of what we thought of as mountains is being rewritten. We slow our pace as much because of the onslaught of twisting blind bends as for the sheer majesty of the landscape around us. We have been skirting the Afghanistan border for two days on the way to Kulyab. Where the Gunt River meets the Panj River, we detour north for 40 miles before again heading west at Rushan. The tar comes and goes whimsically and for the most part we are riding up on the pegs.

To our left the Panj River flows fast and full, swollen from the first of winter's heavy snow. On the western bank lies Afghanistan and dozens of tiny settlements that cling impossibly to mountain-sides. Local Afghans wave to us as we pass. Dozens of dark painted signs come and go, each marked with a skull and bones to denote a heavily mined area. Finally, we reach Dushanbe and set about collecting our Iranian and Turkmenistan visas.

POLICE AND GPS GAMES

Armed with our visas, we travel into Uzbekistan, and it's on the outskirts of the city of Samarkand that I'm waved to the side of the road by a traffic policeman who is fumbling with his speed gun. He is doing his best to convince me I was speeding, demanding I pay an instant fine of \$50 (£38). He hadn't even been holding the gun when I'd passed him! Catching the officer off guard, I shake his hand proudly, stating: "I am a policeman in the UK, we are brothers and I have a GPS." I tap the screen firmly, flicking through the functions, quickly finding the calculator feature and punch in the numbers 6 and 3. With a half-smile I show my antagonist that my GPS told me I was only doing 63 when I passed him. Suitably impressed, the officer agrees and the fine disappears.

Once in Samarkand, we park up in the heart of the ancient city and sit quietly on the steps of the magnificent Registan. In medieval times, throngs of people would gather in this grand public square for royal proclamations, parades, and executions. It would also have been bustling with travellers and traders from distant lands who, like Lisa and I, were travelling the Silk Route. Perhaps the most famous of all was Marco Polo whose travelogue *The Book of the Marvels of the World* has enthralled readers for centuries. Sitting in the Registan while slurping down mouthfuls of fresh pomegranate juice, it's slowly sinking in that we're experiencing those same marvels of the world ourselves. We can only imagine what the road ahead has in store. **ABR**



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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

After quitting his job and splitting up with his girlfriend, **OLLIE ROOKE** finds himself in hot water from the get-go on a journey through Norway



WHO'S WRITING?

Before joining *Adventure Bike Rider* as a staff writer, Ollie Rooke lived and worked in his home city of London. In 2018, he set off on a grand tour around Europe, but after nine weeks on the road, he broke his ankle in a crash in Latvia and was flown home for an operation. Finding himself housebound for six weeks, he wrote a blog post about the crash that proved popular online. Ollie hasn't looked back since, writing for online publications before sending a hopeful application to *ABR* while on another trip around Spain and Portugal. Life couldn't get much better for an adventure biking enthusiast, although he's quick to tell anyone who'll listen that living in the Midlands will never compare to South London.

“S

o, would you like a massage... from both of us?” Ah, there it was. I'd sensed some sexual tension in the air. To be honest, the situation I'd found myself had seemed too good to be true. Now the proposition had been made and it hung in the fug of moist air above the hot tub the three of us were

sharing. I wracked my brain for what to do next. My new friends were an older couple who had kindly offered me a spare room for the night in their house in the Norwegian hills. It wasn't that I was ungrateful. I'd drunk my own bodyweight in beer, gorged on pizza, and had the chance to soak my weary muscles after a long day in the saddle. But now it was time to pay the piper and they just happened to be revealing a lot of flesh in their skimpiest swimwear. How the hell had I got myself in this mess?

The answer was a simple one. Six months before my wheels touched Norwegian soil, I was sat in a pub with my Dad when I declared, out of the blue: “I'm going to ride my motorcycle around Europe.” I'd been working in London for two years since finishing University, I'd split up with my girlfriend, and found myself at a loose end in need of a serious dose of adventure. I'd never been able to dig into a trust fund to set off on a gap year, but now I'd put away enough savings to finance the sort of trip I'd dreamed about since passing my bike test a few years earlier.

Buoyed by the excitement of the unknown, and a few Guinness for good measure, my dad helped me sketch out a plan that involved heading north all the way through Norway to Nordkapp, the northernmost point accessible by road in mainland Europe, before diving back down to encircle the continent. It would be a hell of a trip. After a few weeks making my way north, I found myself camped just outside of Oslo, my first night in Norway, and wondering what the country had to offer. At a petrol station, the social hub of solo travellers, I'd been told by a biker about a Facebook group I should join called Bunk-a-Biker Norway.

Intrigued, I posted a rough map of my route on the group's wall and explained what I was doing which had unexpectedly led to a flood of offers of spare beds to stay for a night, riders to show me the best roads as I passed through their hometown and, of course, an invite to the house with a hot tub I now found myself in. It was just the type of random, stranger-influenced occurrence that I'd dreamt of since I first read Ted Simon's famous book *Jupiter's Travels*. And now here I was, in nothing more than my trunks, wondering how to tactfully decline the offer in front of me, without cutting off the rich vein of beer that had been flowing all evening. I went for the Boris Johnson approach, producing a posh, bumbling English accent as I cheerfully turned down their request, acting as if I had misunderstood ▶

the intention behind the offer. I quickly excused myself from the jacuzzi and headed upstairs to bed where I barricaded my door with my panniers, just to be sure.

The next morning, after a slap-up breakfast and no more untoward offers, I set off in the direction of Lysebotn on the couple's recommendation. A small, isolated fishing village, Lysebotn is accessed by boat up the fjord, or by just one road over the surrounding mountains that is impassable in the winter. In fact, calling it a village may be an overstatement. It has a year-round population that could just about field a football team with a couple of subs for good measure. But, in summer when the road is cleared of snow and ice, the village is buzzing with tourists. It sounded intriguing and a photo of the road dropping down into the valley further cemented the idea in my head. Falling almost 1,000m, and taking in 27 hairpin turns, it looked like a length of rope had been tossed carelessly from the heavens above. It is a genuine must-ride road.

After a few days working my way through the stunning surrounding fjords, I found myself within a few hours of Lysebotn. By this point Norway had decided to scrunch up the European-wide memo regarding the heatwave that had been beating down across the continent and instead delivered a biblical storm that made a British yellow weather warning look like a spring shower. Hunkered down in a petrol station I checked my phone. The next day promised clear skies and sun. If I could spend the night within touching distance of the village, I could tackle that epic pass the next morning and stop at the top for a hike.

There was one problem in my planning though. I hadn't factored in just how sparsely populated Norway was. There was nothing in sight, and as I stopped at a layby that indicated I was nearly 1,000m above the ground, I realised that accommodation wasn't going to appear until I reached the village. Naively, I'd managed to stumble onto the steep, technical mountain pass in the middle of a rainstorm. Mind you, it was a hell of a rush navigating those hairpins with torrents of rainwater streaming past me but I was relieved to roll into the village at the bottom, soggy but content after a challenging ride. Unsurprisingly, the hostel in the village had a monopoly over tourist lodgings and my bed, burger and beer set me back far more than I'd have hoped, although I'd certainly earned them.

The next morning, I woke up to resplendent sunshine. Norway had sensed my plight and delivered a cracking summer's day. I stopped at the bottom of the pass briefly, watching a van ahead of me climb the hairpins. My waitress the night before said that most of the traffic would be going up in the morning, so leave enough time and I'd have a clear run of the road. She was right. It was an epic ride. The steep drop-offs to my right giving way to spectacular views as I scraped my pegs and twisted my way up the edge of this vast, deep fjord. It was a truly memorable road, but I resisted the urge to turn around and do it again. Instead I stripped myself down in the carpark at the top and changed into my hiking gear. Leaving my riding kit draped over the bike (Norway is one of the safest countries in Europe when it comes to crime), I set off to Kjeragbolten, a huge boulder suspended between the cliffs, nearly 1,000m above the floor of the fjord.

It was a beautiful day and the clear skies meant the views of the Lord of the Rings-esque country stretched for miles and miles. On the walk, I bumped into an Irish girl and an English guy who had hired a car to explore the southern fjords. We hiked together and I was grateful for the self-deprecating sense of humour we share in Britain and Ireland. Their company helped make a good day an unforgettable one. As we neared the top, we found enough snow to have a decent snowball fight and when we all came to



THE PICTURESQUE
VILLAGE OF REINE



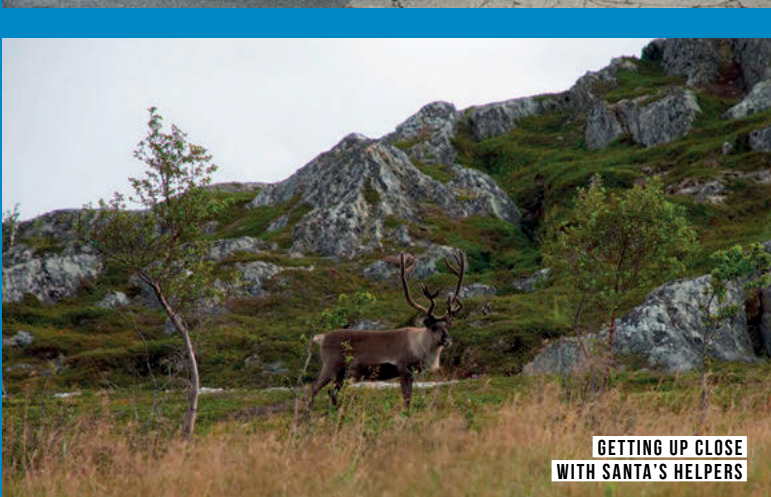
A PEACEFUL
WILD CAMPING SPOT



THE VIEW ABOVE LYSEBOTN



SKIPPING OVER
THE KJERAGBOLTEN



jump up onto the iconic boulder, seen in so many Instagram feeds, I was grateful that someone could capture my wobbly knees on camera as I stood on top.

Throughout the next three days I travelled up the west coast of Norway, but sadly, non-stop rain was dampening my mood. I'd opted to spend the majority of my evenings wild camping and cooking on my small petrol stove, which was a romantic notion, but the reality of unrolling a sodden, tiny one-man tent and spending the night spooning my wet kit had started to get old pretty quickly. During one such evening I made a decision. There was far more to come in the north of the country and I had a long way to go yet. So, the next day I turned back inland on the highways, and before long I was out from under the blanket of storm clouds, into the sun once again. The west coast would just have to be tackled again on a future journey.

Pushing on northwards, I started to realise I was getting into a good travelling groove. Each day in the late afternoon I'd start to keep an eye out for prime wild camping spots. Water was always a good bet and I usually found a nice spot on the banks of a fjord or lake that I could dip my feet into, music blaring out of my Bluetooth speaker, as the day wound to a close.

It was how I'd dreamed my journey would be before I left home but my social contact was restricted and I found myself missing people more than I'd expected. However, the biker family always had my back. There were more Bunk-a-Biker stays where my hosts would feed me slap up meals, stuff my panniers full of instant noodles, and thankfully not suggest any hot tub threesomes. I met bikers in laybys, fuel stations, and was even invited to join the crowds at a biker festival where I was smug to see that I'd travelled the furthest out of all the attendees.

About halfway up the coast I found myself with a decision to make. Further inland lay the E6, the road I was told most people in a hurry took on their way up to Nordkapp. But local riders had pointed me in the other direction, suggesting I take the FV17 and travel up the coast. The route took me around three days (it would have been quicker if I wasn't so trigger-happy with my camera) and saw me island hopping on a network of small ferries, one of which would also take me across the Arctic Circle, making me an arctic explorer, in name at least.

The coastal road was a great recommendation. With my best riding playlist blaring out of my intercom, I cruised down vast stretches of empty tarmac, the turquoise sea glinting away to my left and the land rising steeply to my right. The sun had its hat on and each ferry stop gave me a chance to break out my micro chair and catch some rays, contentedly listening to the line of traffic building up until the ferry began loading. Atlantic coastal roads always seem to deliver, but having ridden them in Ireland, Portugal and Spain, I have to say Norway's was the pick of the bunch. Wild camping spots were easy to find on these clustered islands, although reality kicked in with a rainstorm that almost had my tent floating off into the night as I camped outside of the port town of Bodo.

Rolling into the town utterly drenched the next morning, I felt a little sad to be leaving behind this stretch of road. However, once again there was better to come. The Lofoten Islands make up a near mythical archipelago that stretches out into the Atlantic from the mainland like Pinocchio's nose. I caught a ferry that dropped me off at the very tip and I gave myself three days to head back. This didn't feel like enough time to explore this other-worldly collection of towering islands, but Norway's prices were eating into my budget and I knew I had to get a wriggle on. The road started at a town aptly named A, before passing through the postcard-perfect fishing village of Reine. Given enough time ►

WANT TO RIDE IN NORWAY?

From the UK, I travelled from Folkestone to Calais on the Eurotunnel and then spent two two-long days on highways riding to the tip of Denmark, where you can catch a ferry to Norway. I thought, as a Londoner, I knew what expensive meant but I was wrong. Norway is eye-wateringly pricey. Despite enjoying plenty of wild camping, my four weeks set me back around £1,200.

For fans of camping, there are plenty of well-signposted sites across Norway, while wild camping is legal and a fantastic experience. Campsites tend to feature hyttes, small wooden huts, which are an attractive proposition. If you're looking to meet and stay with locals, I'd recommend joining the Bunk-a-Biker Norway Facebook group, or checking out rooms on Airbnb.



THE BIKE

My bike for the trip was a bright orange BMW F 650 GS twin that I'd had restricted to comply with my A2 licence. Despite struggling slightly on the long blasts up the German autobahn, it was the ideal companion for my first big tour, proving to be as reliable as a Swiss watch. It's not the best-looking machine but that meant it was unattractive to would-be thieves wherever I parked up. I've now travelled to 18 countries on my GS and it's a bike that I will never sell.

or patience, you're likely to catch sight of killer whales breaching in Reine's bay. Sadly, I was lacking in both, instead itching to further explore the islands. Those scenic ribbons of tarmac and bridges cutting between each island called to me in their own whale song that is audible only to motorcyclists, and it was impossible to ignore them.

It was hard to make swift progress in Lofoten. Around each blind bend lay another postcard-worthy view that had me stopping to break out my camera. Not that I was complaining. The never ending battle between an uninterrupted ride and the perfect capture was a nice problem to have. By the time I reached Tromsø, with the Lofoten Islands behind me, I must have taken close to 1,000 photos.

Norway presented other unique experiences too. One particular day, as I cruised along, I spotted a flash of brown to my right. It was my first sighting of a wild reindeer. I parked the bike, almost forgetting to kick down the side stand in my haste to snap a photo. He was a tricky customer though, cantering away from me as I paused to take the money shot. After making a fool of myself to any passers-by watching, I finally got the all-important photo, although my sense of triumph was short-lived as I approached Hammerfest, a reindeer husbandry centre. They were bloody everywhere. And, unlike my elusive subject from the morning, the ones I encountered weren't shy either. In fact, they seemed to relish the opportunity to spring out in front of my bike. By the end of the day, which had started with me excitedly chasing one with a camera, I was sick of the sight of Santa's helpers.

Soon enough, I was ready for the final push to Nordkapp. The road heading north, the E69, is a biker's dream. In contrast to the rest of Norway, there's not much to admire in the far north, where the landscape is barren and relatively flat. This meant I could give my full and undivided attention to the road, an absolute peach that hugs the coast and cuts through this empty land. It's an endless succession of long sweeping turns and pin-back-the-throttle straights. The wide-open views of the barren land ensured I wouldn't be surprised by a police speed trap.

And then I arrived at Nordkapp. My elation was slightly dampened by the entrance fee which would have bought me another three pints in the bar the night before, but I shrugged it off as the last Norwegian price to balk at. I snapped some photos of the iconic globe and explored the tourist centre that houses the gift shop and exhibitions, picking up those all-important pannier stickers. With my goody bag full, I headed back to my bike. Swinging my leg over my orange BMW, I thumbed the starter switch and let the bike idle while I slid on my helmet and gloves. It was a long way back down the E69 to the mainland, and even further still to Finland.

I let out a laugh. It had been seven weeks since I'd found myself panic buying GB stickers and a first aid kit at the train terminal in Folkestone, and here I was sitting at the top of Europe on my motorbike. I'd made it all on my own. And for four of those weeks, I'd had the privilege of meandering my way around Norway, an eye-wateringly beautiful country that housed some of the friendliest people I'd ever met (sometimes a little too friendly), and certainly the best motorcycling culture I'd ever experienced.

Kicking the bike into first gear, I passed through the car park's exit and head out back onto the road I'd arrived on. It was late afternoon but the golden glow of the Arctic sun wasn't going anywhere in a hurry. I suddenly felt energised and in the mood for another long ride through this motorcycling paradise. Norway will do that to you. **ABR**

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ADVENTURE BACKPACK



TUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE

JULIAN CHALLIS travels deep into the jungles of Cambodia for 10 days of motorcycling mayhem, but will he emerge from the toughest ride of his life unscathed?



WHO'S WRITING?



Julian Challis spends most of his life on and around motorcycles and he is the bike tester for *Adventure Bike Rider* magazine. Starting on two wheels at the tender age of eight, Julian has ridden motocross, enduro, time trials and adventure rallies, and has been a motorcycle journalist since 2005. His current bikes are two KTM 250 EXCs (2001 and 2013), a 1995 Yamaha TDM850, and a 2007 HRC Honda Fireblade. He also teaches CBT, rides camera bikes, and somewhat bizarrely, collects old clocks and watches.

B

oy, that was intense. We've just completed nearly 20 miles of the tightest, gnarliest, and most challenging trails that any of us have ever ridden. We've ducked underneath hanging vines, wrestled our bikes over fallen logs, climbed rock strewn gullies, splashed through jungle rivers, and dodged hundreds of bamboo spears that line the track. We've broken gear levers, suffered punctures, and even holed a fuel tank on a frantic yet life-affirming traverse along the infamous Tiger Trail. When we finally emerge into a clearing at the end of the trail, we're dripping with sweat and covered in dust, but the grins on all our faces cannot be hidden. This is the type of adventure we came to Cambodia for and we're loving it.

I'd last ridden in Cambodia back in 2016, teaming up with the tour company Ride Expeditions for a 13-day rambling adventure that took me from the bustling capital of Phnom Penh, all the way round to the party town of Siem Reap. Now I was back to ride a similarly sinuous route, this time in the west of this incredibly beautiful country. After 14 hours of travel trying not to worry about coronavirus, I eventually touch down in Siem Reap's tiny airport. Fellow rider Patrik from Sweden joins me, and we set off into the bustling streets, heading for our hotel. The rest of our riding group have been in the city for a day or so already, and from the look of some of them, have found the infamous Pub Street on a number of occasions.

The main party is a group of lads from New Zealand who have known each other since primary school. There's Dan, accompanied by Jack, Luke, Darren, Mike, and four brothers: twins Gered and Dayle, along with Mitch and the youngest Jayden. Bringing up the rear, metaphorically and, as it will later transpire literally, is Pete who's come all the way from Chicago. Oh, and Ian the tour company's video guy is joining us too.

A BLOODY HISTORY

We sling our bags into our hotel rooms and then pile into four tuk-tuks to see the world-famous temples of Angkor Wat. Our official visitor guide isn't the best, immediately informing us that he'd phoned in sick with a hangover but nobody was available to cover his shift. But Angkor Wat more than makes up for it. The enormous and intricately carved temple complex soars towards the sky and the gods that they celebrate. Through somewhat stilted English, our slowly improving guide relays the long and often horrific history of the sites we visit. Cambodia has been bullied, pillaged and brutalised by every one of its neighbours over its turbulent history. And if it wasn't the neighbours, it was colonial invaders or, in more recent times, their own people that have done the damage. It's a wonder that anything has survived here at all.

Bright and early the next morning, we head down to the bikes which are sitting resplendent outside the hotel. The base bikes on ►

the tour are Kawasaki KLX 300s, although some of the group have upgraded to a selection of Yamaha WR250Fs and WR450Fs. I've got a WR250F and I could not be happier. Once we're given a safety recap and introduced to the team of sweeper riders, mechanics, and our legendary run leader and Cambodia Rally hero Vut, we are swiftly out on the roads. Just 10 minutes into the trip, Vut dives off to the left to pick up the first trail, a beautiful and sweeping sandy track that cuts through a series of tiny villages surrounding the city. Half an hour later we call in at a Buddhist temple for a blessing from the monks who splash us with holy water and give us all a little red cotton wristband to bring us luck on the journey. And it's not a moment too soon for Dayle, as mere minutes after leaving the temple he nearly takes an early bath in our first water crossing.

BARBECUED RAT

After lunch, we pick up a long straight trail that slices through arable land and it's a flat-out blast. The track has enough potholes and unexpected dips to require your attention but getting it right and pulling back to wheelie through the obstacles at 60 mph feels so good. We then take a path across fields that are still burning as farmers clear stubble. The heat is intense and it's good to get through and pick up a winding road that leads us to a large village and a drink stop. There are also a selection of stalls selling what looks like the buffet from hell. We all try a bit of the fare on offer and can conclude that barbecued rat is pretty tough and awful, snake is even worse, and deep-fried spicy crickets are surprisingly good if a bit crunchy. We didn't touch the fermented duck foetus. Dubiously refreshed, we continue with a mixture of trails and roads to reach Battambang and our first stopover in a riverside hotel, where showers, a sumptuous meal and clean sheets are waiting. What a great first day.

The following morning, our first stop is a visit to the truly horrific Killing Caves, an underground complex within an enormous rock outcrop. During its brutal rule that began in the late '70s, the Khmer Rouge slaughtered hundreds of its fellow citizens here, throwing the bodies of men, women and children into the caverns below. It's a chilling reminder of the awful history of this country. Back to the bikes and we drop back down to the flat plains and onto a series of fast, wide dusty trails, so we need to keep spread out to actually see what we're riding on. A bit later, we have to negotiate a worryingly rickety rope bridge, a process made trickier when we meet a guy and his wife coming the other way on a heavily loaded scooter. Thankfully, we make it over unscathed and follow a lovely section of winding single track that slices through the woods for mile after mile.

A SCARY FERRY CROSSING

After a lunch stop to fill up and try to cool down in the 32C heat, we leave the hills for a long and fast dirt trail heading south. I'm out front with Vut and we ride alongside each other for a glorious 12 miles of flat out dirt riding heaven. We later arrive dusty but happy at our massive guest house complex around 4pm and the support truck is waiting with cold beers ready for us. After showers and a change of clothes, we wander into the tiny town for Nom Pows, a type of steamed dumpling, and then back for a barbecue and boules.

The following morning, we embark on a massive 25-mile dirt road blast to blow away the cobwebs and take us to the Ossam region. We refuel at a tiny roadside stall, a young girl decanting fuel from a massive container into an impossibly small watering can, while we seek out the ice-cold espressos and Cokes in the cooler. We then face the task of making a 'ferry' crossing across a lake. I say ferry, but that may be somewhat over egging the seemingly random selection of planks and wood that has been lashed



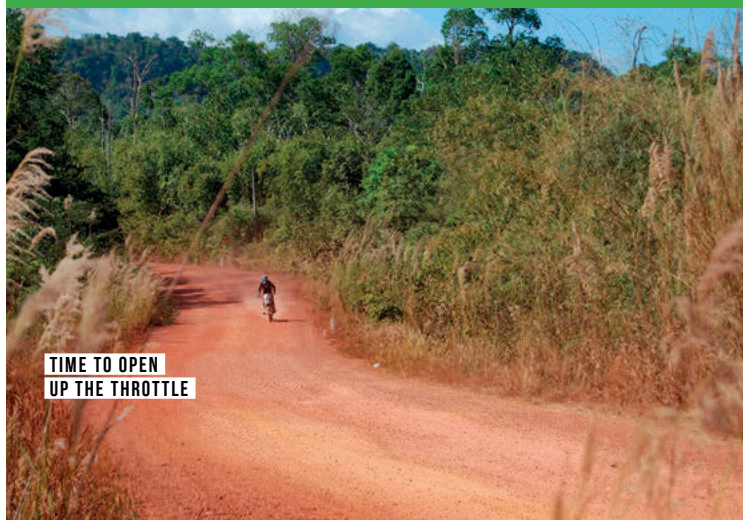
SLICING A TRAIL
THROUGH THE VAST JUNGLE



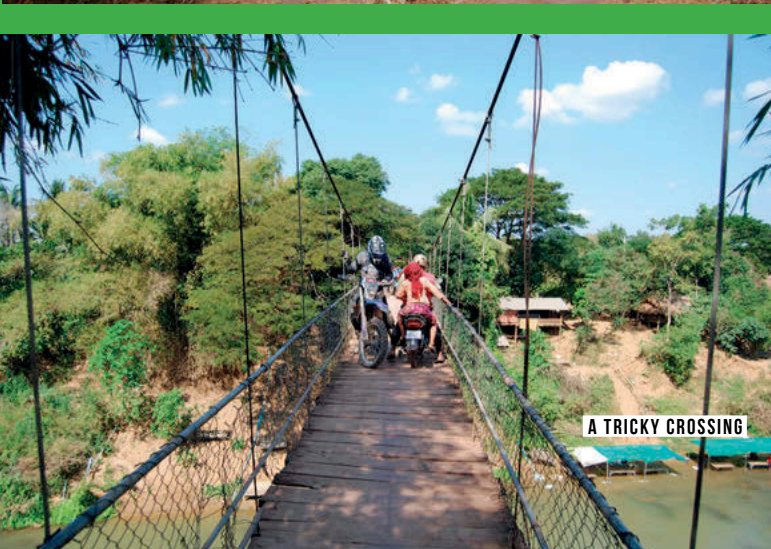
ANYONE FOR
BARBECUED RAT?



A MOTLEY CREW AHOY!



TIME TO OPEN
UP THE THROTTLE

THE TEMPLES
OF ANGKOR WATDAN GETS HIS
FRONT WHEEL UP

A TRICKY CROSSING

to the top of a couple of canoes and then fitted with an outboard motor. Riding onto the craft is perhaps the scariest bit as you have to ignore the huge potential for disaster, but once loaded up, it is surprisingly stable as the smiling boatman chugs us over to the other side of the lake. Riding off the ferry, well, that's almost as worrying as getting on.

THE TIGER TRAIL

Once on the other side in two boatloads, it's a brief sandy climb away from the river and onto a forest track. An hour or so later we pick up the infamous Tiger Trail, an 18-mile narrow and sinuous route that was never really intended for motorcycles and at times this is pretty damn obvious. We muscle the bikes left and right through undergrowth, forest streams, and up steep, rocky climbs deep in the jungle. To add to the difficulty, the trail is often lined with sharp bamboo stems where locals have cut through them with machetes, while overhead vines loop over the trail at the perfect height to catch our visors and drag us off in a classic clothesline move. It's tough riding, especially for Luke whose unscheduled foray off the trail holes his fuel tank and drenches his crotch in unleaded. When, some three hours later we finally emerge from the trees, the sense of achievement is delicious, as is the meal at the surprisingly well stocked café we reach 10 minutes later.

With lunch eaten, we head off and I become temporary sweeper rider and fixer, a duty that I'm immediately called on as Jack's throttle cable snaps. As we're in spitting distance of our evening stop at Koh Kong, he's good enough to improvise by pulling the bare cable as he rides. We arrive at the riverside hotel half an hour later, and with a free day tomorrow, we start on what turns out to be a fairly alcohol-fuelled evening.

Day six dawns and we head south for an hour on a series of blacktop and dirt roads. We hang a right in a village where alongside the road is a middle-aged man singing awful karaoke through a massive sound system, his near deafened children sitting obediently next to him looking suitably embarrassed. The loud noise has clearly interfered with our video guy Ian's balance as on the simple water crossing that follows he falls in totally immersing himself, the bike and his camera bag. Luckily the bag protects the tech but we have to stop at a handy local mechanic to change the oil and dry out the electrics while Ian sits steaming gently in the morning sun.

With the bike back to health, we're off again and this time it's the Smugglers Trail, although quite what you could smuggle down this incredibly tight and twisty route is not clear. Ian is clearly getting tired as first he falls on a rocky descent and then he whistles into a ditch, holing his radiator hose and smacking himself into the ground. I manage to repair the hose and refill the rad with my camelback before the mechanics arrive and we press on to a river crossing.

TIME TO RELAX

Toby points out the best way through the slippery rocks which I stupidly believe and go first, slithering off the bike and into the water like a pro. Half an hour later we reach our wonderful eco lodges in Chi Phat, and after dumping kit and donning shorts and flip flops, we head down to the river for a swim where Vut and the team have been busy constructing a zip line for motorcycles for a quick and a rather heart-in-mouth crossing. While not necessary at this time of year, tours later in the year often face deep river crossings, so Toby is keen to try out the hardware and technique to get both riders and bikes across without getting wet. However, before we can fully test it, a tropical storm starts, the heavy rain lashing down onto the roofs of our huts in the fading light. The next morning, after an hour or so of fiddling, the zip wire eventually ►

WANT TO RIDE IN CAMBODIA?

I flew with Thai Airways from London Heathrow to Bangkok, and then on the short hop to Siem Reap. Although costs may have changed considerably since February 2020 when this trip took place, flights were readily available at between £500 and £600 depending on connections.

Local currency is Cambodian riels with an exchange rate of around 5,300 riels to the pound. As with most places in Asia, US dollars are welcome almost everywhere, so it's always sensible to take plenty of dollars in small denominations with you. Cash machines are common in the bigger cities but on this type of trip you won't find one in the jungle.

Similarly, while English is spoken in the larger places, you will have difficulties in the more remote areas. Luckily Ride Expeditions trips are largely inclusive of most costs, so you won't need much cash, and its staff and English-speaking Cambodian guides and mechanics sort everything out for you. Check out the tours at www.rideexpeditions.com



JULIAN ON THE
SMUGGLER'S TRAIL

THE BIKE

I was riding a Yamaha WRF250 which proved the perfect bike for the riding and terrain in Cambodia. The little WR has always been a solid performer on the trails but the upgrade in 2012 took it to the next level, with Yamaha using not only the sublime aluminium perimeter frame lifted straight out of their championship winning motocross bikes, but also used the same truly exceptional reverse-angled DOHC motor, with only a few minor tweaks to make it enduro friendly.

The result is just what off-road riders had wanted, a competent and enjoyable machine that was fast enough to compete in top-class competition, but still flexible enough to ride trails all day long. The handling is precise and effortless, the suspension on the firm side of plush, and that motor is one of the best you'll find.

Although many road riders coming into off-road riding will think they need to be on a 450, on the trails, the 250 is perhaps the ideal balance of power, weight and handling. If you can ride this bike without smiling, there's something wrong with you.

works, propelling the fearless Dan and his bike across the river while the rest of us ride through like the locals. Pete has rejoined the group after a day off, and with the trails beautifully damp from last night's rain, we're ready for action. Of course, the rain has also swelled the rivers and the crossings get very tricky as we negotiate water lapping well over the wheels with varying degrees of success. OK, so Ian and Pete fell in, but at least the water was warm. Some two hours later we finally emerge from the jungle and spend the rest of the day riding a superb selection of dirt trails and twisting tarmac roads, scaping footpegs as we go. Our wild campsite for the night is perched at the top of an enormous cliff. We're above the cloud line and the view is absolutely stunning. As the sun fades, we enjoy a chilled-out evening of barbecued food and beers around the campfire before we turn in for the night.

PUPPY SUSHI

I get up early the following morning to watch the sunrise from the edge of the cliff, while below me the jungle resounds with the sound of tropical birds and tree frogs. It's a magical moment. We soon leave camp and wind our way out of the forest along narrow tracks and over some alarmingly sketchy wooden bridges. The track turns to road and eventually leads us down into the bustling town of Trayung where we refuel before riding a track with plenty of watersplashes, during which Dan rather unsportingly soaks me with a deluge of brown fluid. That afternoon we snake across the flat landscape towards Kampot. There are plenty of hazards to negotiate in the many villages we pass through, but the heart stopper is when two tiny puppies tumble out into our path. I'm convinced that Jack's Kawasaki is going to make them into instant dog sushi.

Puppies avoided, we eventually reach Kampot around 4pm. It's a big riverside town popular with tourists and backpackers with a plentiful supply of cool bars and shops. Sunday starts with Ian and I taking the bikes into town for some delicious banana pancakes and great coffee, and once we catch up with the other guys, we take a joyfully winding road up to the top of the Preah Monivong Bokor Nature Reserve. A few hours later, we emerge onto the road and follow it down to the coastal town of Kep, home to the famous Crab Market. It's an assault on the senses, but with dubious hygiene standards in this chaotic mess of vendors, I play it safe with a couple of sarongs for my daughters and a Cornetto for myself.

We leave the market and head for the jetty a bit further down the coast where we leave the bikes for a boat ride into the Gulf of Thailand. We're heading for Rabbit Island, the tropical paradise where we will spend our penultimate night. Despite a complete lack of bunnies, it's a truly stunning place with a narrow ribbon of beach bars and cabins sitting on the edge of the soft white sand and the unfeasibly warm water. We spend the afternoon swimming and chilling before enjoying a beach barbecue as the sun slips toward the distant horizon. It doesn't get much better than this.

Somewhat sadly, we wake up to our last day of the trip and, once we've taken the ferry back to the mainland, we start our route towards Siem Reap. However, Vut still has a few surprises in store. We peel off the highway and, after some sweeping dirt tracks, he leads us onto a sensational 12-mile section of sandy trails through tunnels of trees where riding flat out is simply the only option. When we eventually emerge into open land, there are massive grins all round, but all too soon, we need to head towards our final destination and we somewhat reluctantly make our way to Phnom Penh and Ride Expeditions' Cambodian HQ. When the bikes are finally silenced, it's high fives and beers all round. It has been an astounding trip on some of the best and most challenging trails I've ever ridden. The company was great, the riding wonderful, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Cambodia rocks! **ABR**

ALPINESTARS



ANDES v3 JACKET



PROTECTS



BMW

S 1000 XR

AFTER TWO MONTHS OF OWNERSHIP, BRYN DAVIES TAKES A LOOK AT BMW'S BIG ADVENTURE SPORTS BIKE TO SEE IF IT'S WORTH THE CASH

In the last issue of *Adventure Bike Rider* magazine, my long-term review piece was about me welcoming the BMW S 1000 XR to the family. I took delivery of the bike just before we went to print, so I didn't have too much time to get to grips with the machine or indeed do anything else on it other than

ride back and forth to work.

Fast forward a few months and here we are. The bike's now got over 1,000 miles on the clock and I've had the great pleasure of riding it in a number of scenarios and conditions which the average owner will face on a day-to-day basis. From slow town riding on a commute to work to blasting down the motorway, the only thing I haven't had the pleasure of doing with the XR yet is covering serious miles on a jaunt over to Europe.

All that in mind, I decided that, for this issue, I'm going to take a bit of a deeper look into the 2020 BMW S 1000 XR – a bike that's part superbike, part adventure, and part tourer. But keep in mind that I'm referring to the top-spec S 1000 XR TE model...

When BMW introduced the original S 1000 XR back in 2015, the adventure sports sector was almost exclusively owned by Ducati and its Multistrada. Back then, manufacturers were only just cottoning on to the fact that there was a large chunk of the market who wanted the neck-jarring performance of a sports bike but the comfort and practicality that adventure bikes have become so popular for.

There was an increasing realisation that most adventure riders didn't sleep in ditches and cross the steppes of Mongolia on their weekend rides. Likewise, it was becoming apparent that, despite a desire to look like leather-bound sex gods with knee sliders

worn to the bone, the average sports bike rider was part of an ageing demographic which couldn't continue to sustain the chiropractor bills every time they hunched over for a ride.

With this, it was amazing that it took so long for manufacturers to catch on that combining the best of the 'adventure' and 'sports' world would prove to be a popular decision. In the years after it was launched, the S 1000 XR became BMW's best-selling four-cylinder model in the UK. Likewise, when Yamaha followed suit with its Tracer, that became the best-selling motorcycle in the UK for the first few months of its existence – quite an achievement. The appetite for blistering performance and all-day comfort was clearly there.

After four years of the S 1000 XR remaining pretty much unchanged, under the glitzy lights of the Milan Motorcycle Show the lads from Bavaria were proudly showcasing a new and updated model for 2020. You'd be forgiven for missing it though. Also revealed at the same time was the smaller, more affordable and brand-new baby brother of the big litre bike, the F 900 XR. If the 1000 was Malcolm Young of AC/DC playing on stage, the 900 was Angus peacocking around in the front, soaking up the limelight.

The same story was true at Motorcycle Live a month later, though this time, rather than pouring over other journalists' images, I was there staring at the bikes in the flesh. I'd been invited to the BMW stand for breakfast, and despite understandable best efforts to draw my attention to the all-new 900, I just couldn't take my eyes off the 1000.

It had been almost five years since I had last ridden the S 1000 XR. That was on a two-week-long trip to the Alps where I discovered the pure unadulterated joy of a sports bike in adven- ➤





COMFORTABLE AND UPRIGHT SEATING POSITION

ture clothing and, staring at it in Hall 3 of the NEC, my mind was whisked back to memories of that incredible trip.

There are some bikes that you just can't help but fall in love with. For me, that S 1000 XR was the one. It made me feel like a naughty schoolboy again. It made me feel alive, and it was oh so fun to ride on the mountain passes. It didn't matter that the bike vibrated so viciously at motorway speeds that my wing mirror fell off on a French autoroute, or that I walked into hotel lobbies hobbling around like I'd eaten nothing but vindaloos for a week (the seat lacked cushioning), the bike's intoxicating on-road performance had me hooked.

The smell of greasy Phil's burger van brought me back into Hall 3 of the NEC with a thud, and I took a closer look at the new-for-2020 S 1000 XR. A lot had been changed for 2020 and it'd be worth you reading BMW's spiel about the bike to find out exactly what (I could spend the rest of this review reeling off the changes).

Amongst those updates is a newly developed version of the 999cc in-line four-cylinder engine that offers the same power output as the previous model but with more usable power throughout the rev range. The gearing has been adapted, with the fourth, fifth, and sixth gears being longer to help improve fuel economy, and there's a whole host of electronic wizardry that's included as standard now to help you keep such ridiculous amounts of power on the road.

A new frame and the reduction in size of some components has led to a weight saving of 10kg, and the looks of the bike have been completely modified to create a more modern, sleek appearance. In fact, the new facelift makes last year's model look decidedly dated. To further bring it up to date, the bike also features the same 6.5' TFT dash that you'll find on the new GS range of bikes.

Before we go on, I just want to touch on the fact that the engine of the S 1000 XR is based on the high-performance engine of BMW's RR, a bike that was originally made to compete in Superbike World Championships. Amongst other things, that means that it's an

incredibly well refined powerplant that's absolutely bonkers when you let it loose.

THE FIRST RIDES

Six months later a van pulled up outside the ABR offices, a BMW logo on its side hinting at what its cargo might be. I'd been waiting for this day for a long, long time. Like most things, delivery of my long-term loan bike for the year had been impacted by the global pandemic.

Despite having the desire to disappear over the Channel for a few weeks and test out the bike on the mountain roads of the Alps, my first ride (and first month or so of rides) were characterised by the back and forth hustle to the office. Thanks to our old pal Corona, the roads were unusually quiet on my commutes and I had them almost to myself.

When you take the S 1000 XR out for a test ride you'll immediately notice a few things. The first being the seating position. It's definitely more 'upright adventure' than 'leaning forward sports', but you will find yourself with a slight bend at the hips and noticeable weight going through your shoulders and elbows. Initially, it's a comfortable position to be in, so no complaints from me.

You'll also realise how the scooped seat decides where you'll be sitting. There's no room to slide back or forward. Fortunate then that the position, along with the knee bend, seemed to be just right for my 6'2 frame.

I set the mirrors (which are nice and big) to the right angle and fiddled with the screen (which has two positions: low and high). Here, I discovered that the S 1000 XR has possibly the easiest to adjust screen I've come across on a bike. There's no fiddling, just a simple push or pull and it clunks satisfyingly into position (though the handle is annoyingly on the right-hand side, meaning you have to reach across or use your throttle hand if you want to adjust it in on the fly).

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £14,285
- ✓ **ENGINE** Liquid-cooled In-line four-cylinder
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 999cc
- ✓ **GEARBOX** Six speed
- ✓ **POWER** 162bhp @ 11,000rpm
- ✓ **TORQUE** 114 Nm @ 9,250rpm
- ✓ **SUSPENSION** Front; Upside-down telescopic fork, diameter 45 mm, electronic self-adjusting rebound/compression damping (Dynamic ESA) . Rear; Aluminium double-sided swing-arm, central spring strut, electronic preload adjuster, electronic self-adjusting rebound/compression damping (Dynamic ESA)
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front; Twin disc brakes, diameter 320 mm, floating discs, radial four-piston fixed calipers. Rear; Single disc brake, diameter 265 mm, twin-piston floating caliper
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 226kg
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 20 litres
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 840mm



COMMANDING
ROAD PRESENCE



CRYSTAL-CLEAR
DISPLAY ON THE 6.5" TFT DASH



THE BIKE'S AT HOME
ON THE CURVES AND BENDS

A quick press of the ignition button (the TE model that I have comes with keyless ignition, a feature which I've come to love on motorcycles) and the TFT dash comes to life. If it looks familiar, it's because it's identical to the one that's found on the 1250 GS, which is a great thing because it's crystal clear and easy to read in all situations. Information is displayed clearly and aesthetically, and the menus are easy to navigate thanks to the excellent Wunderwheel on the left handlebar. For those who don't know, the Wunderwheel is a dial on the left-hand handlebar that's integrated with the dash of the bike. It allows you to navigate through settings and menus without having lift your hand, and it's the gold standard for on-bike menu navigation.

There is one annoyance though, and that's how little information is actually visible on the 'main' dash screen. I like to see how much fuel I have at all times, but I also like to see how many miles I've covered on my trip amongst other tidbits of information. You can only view one bit of this information at a time, which is a niggle I had with the GS as well.

After familiarising myself with the controls and playing with the various options (it comes with two suspension settings and four riding modes (Road, Rain, Dynamic, and Dynamic Pro. The latter can be customised completely, with the rider choosing how much assistance they want from the computer, including how restrictive they want the wheelie control to be.)), it was time for the main event – turning the bike on and awakening the 999cc in-line four.

I take great pleasure in firing up a bike for the first time and discovering what it feels and sounds like. The S 1000 XR didn't disappoint. Without any effort it roars to life like a lion showing off its brutal power, before settling into a smooth-sounding idle.

I took a brief moment to paddle the bike around and to shift the weight of the machine from left leg to right leg. At 226kg it feels heavy, but the low seat height of 840mm makes it easy to move around and, at 6'2, I can easily put both feet flat on the ground.

Riding through town, the slow-speed handling and manoeuvrability was surprisingly impressive. The GS is often praised for its slow-speed balance, a trait that's credited to the low-down weight of the boxer engine, but I actually felt more stable at crawling speeds on the XR. This made dawdling through town in stop-start traffic bearable and more enjoyable than I would have thought.

While bumper-to-bumper traffic is easily negotiated, it's when you have an empty road ahead of you that you run into trouble. The XR wants to fly. Riding this beast at 30mph is like telling Usain Bolt he has to jog the 100m rather than sprint it. While there's usable power throughout the rev range, there's no denying that the bike's happiest when it's screaming its tits off. It's here that you realise that you'll have to have the wrist restraint of a celibate monk if you want to keep your license.

After a few weeks of back and forth to work, I joined James and Ollie on a ride to Wales to take on the 10 highest roads in the country (read about that on page 52). It was the perfect opportunity to test out long distance credentials of the bike, including how comfortable it would remain after a long day in the saddle.

A 6am start meant that we were on the road as the sun was rising and before long stopping for coffee and a breakfast bap.

ONTO THE MOTORWAY

We finished up our coffees, slipped into our gloves and helmets and set off for South Wales. Joining the M5 at Tewksbury I had my first chance to experience the bike's capabilities on the motorway. Blasting down the slip road introduces you to the rest of the motorway users by way of a howl, and there's enough power to slot in between traffic without having to plan your entry too much.

With the bike in sixth, motorway speeds are smooth and effortless... in fact, the bike just wants to go faster and faster. I whacked the bike in cruise control to eliminate the temptation to keep increasing the speed. ▶

With my mind free from the battle of wills with my right wrist, I was able to take stock of the bike and how I was feeling. The speedo was showing 70 though it felt like I could have been doing 50. The S 1000 XR's stability and smoothness at speed is impressive. The redesigned fairing also does an exceptionally good job of shielding the rider from buffeting wind, while the screen is surprisingly effective at its job, directing oncoming air up and over my helmet (I'm 6'2).

The seating position remained comfortable and all in all I was in a happy, content place. What was slightly concerning though was that, after about 15 minutes of riding, I had already gone down a blip of fuel. BMW reckons that by lengthening the fourth, fifth, and sixth gear they've managed to improve fuel economy, but the reality is you'll get up to 200 miles a tank. Looking at the bike's computer now, I'm averaging 37mpg – a figure that I'd expect to get from an SUV, not a motorcycle. Of course, I haven't been riding with fuel economy at the front of my mind, it's very hard to when your bike just wants to go, go, go.

Within two hours we'd reached the mountain roads of South Wales and the bike's mannerisms flicked from poised road tourer to psychotic superbike in an instant. For such a large machine, the S 1000 XR is remarkably easy to flick around. Reading the road ahead and working with the bike to dive into bends before grabbing a handful of throttle and shooting out the other side provides a hit that's as potent and addictive as any drug around. This bike makes you want to do bad things.

In many ways, I was relieved when we swapped the sweeping mountain passes for the tight, nadgery single-track lanes. Here, it was impossible for me to ride like a hooligan and so I potted around blind bends and over pot-holed roads. The S 1000 XR's electronic suspension offers two settings; Road and Dynamic. On both you'll find the ride on the firm side if you're comparing it to an adventure bike. On well-groomed roads its excellent and keeps the bike in shape when you're gunning it, but poorly made roads will shake your bones. The XR isn't designed to be taken on the routes less travelled.

After 500-ish miles our wheels were pointing towards home... and I must admit, I was thankful for it. My arse was getting sore and the slight forward bend in the seating position meant that my back was starting to ache. I've been in this position before with the old XR. The first few long days are uncomfortable. But after you've put in the time, your body breaks into the mould of the bike and the second half of a week-long tour is as comfortable as any.

CONCLUSION

As we cut through the sunset on our way back to Stratford upon Avon, I started to sum up my thoughts about the new S 1000 XR. Do I love the bike? Hell yes. Would I buy one if I had the cash? You betcha! Do I think you should buy one? Well, it depends who you are.

If you have no interest in off-road riding and you're keen to experience the thrilling performance of a sports bike with the comfort and road presence of an adventure bike, there are few motorcycles in the same league as the S 1000 XR. It's such an exciting machine to ride and every time I've thrown my leg over it, the miles that follow are both fun and life affirming. As I sit here typing this review, there's nothing I want to do more than fill up the panniers and head off towards the Alps.

On the other hand, if you regularly ride two up and you value comfort over performance, and if you like to dabble in green laning, the S 1000 XR isn't the bike for you. But even then, take one for a test ride – it'll leave you with a smile on your face. **ABR**



AS A COMMUTER

It depends entirely on what your commute is like. If you're filtering through city traffic and restrained by a constant 30mph speed limit, this isn't the bike you'll want to be riding. If you have the fortune of great roads to ride on your way to work, each journey will be a delight. Frugality isn't the order of the day here either (I returned under 40mpg average consumption), so if you're concerned about how much time you're spending at your local garage forecourt look elsewhere.

AS A WEEKEND TOURER

Oh yes. There would be few things more pleasurable than leaving work on a Friday on an S 1000 XR with its panniers loaded up and nothing but two days of glorious riding ahead of you. The bike will eat up the motorway miles that you'll inevitably have to endure (though your arse might not), and once you get to the fun roads you'll be in your element.

AS AN OFF-ROADER

I'm sure you could take the S 1000 XR down the gravel forestry tracks like the Kielder Forest Drive... But why the hell would you? This isn't an off-road bike, nor does it claim to be, and I doubt anyone will be considering it with those uses in mind.

AS A CONTINENTAL ROAD TOURER

This is a toughie. My heart says absolutely! My head says, 'hold on a second...'. You see, this bike would be an absolute dream to ride on the mountain passes of the Alps, it's just the getting there that would be a pain. There are other bikes that are more comfortable in the saddle, and the short fuel range means you'll be stopping every two hours for fuel... Then again, European services tend to have good coffee.

AS AN RTW OVERLANDER

Of course, there's no reason why you couldn't ride around the world on the BMW S 1000 XR if you stuck to the tarmac. You'd have a blast doing it, but that fuel range would be a pain in the arse, likewise the saddle and the medley of electronics.

AS A PILLION CARRIER

If your bike is a 'we' bike rather than a 'me' bike, your pillion isn't going to be too pleased with you. The S 1000 XR will hold a passenger, but there are far more comfortable and secure-feeling perches to sit upon (like a GS).

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TOP 10

BIKES OF THE DECADE

James Oxley and Bryn Davies reveal which motorcycles stood out from the crowd over the past 10 years of *Adventure Bike Rider* magazine

It's the summer of 2010, and Messrs Cameron and Clegg are joined at the hip in the UK's first coalition government since Churchill's war ministry, Fabio Capello's England are sent packing from the World Cup following a 4-1 defeat to Germany, and the word 'austerity' is a daily occurrence on the front pages of newspapers up and down the land. In short, it wasn't the most inspiring start to a new decade, but a glimmer of hope emerged when an adventure biker by the name of Alun Davies put the finishing touches to issue one of a new motorcycling magazine. The rest, they say, is adventure biking history.

Throughout the past 10 years, *Adventure Bike Rider* has striven to inspire, entertain, and inform motorcyclists around the world with a carefully crafted blend of travel features, gear tests, masterclasses, routes to ride, and of course, reviews of the latest and greatest motorcycles.

The first bike to come under the microscope was the Honda XL700V Transalp which Alun declared was perfect for 'comfortable stress-free riding.' A succession of new and improved machines followed in subsequent issues from an ever-growing list of manufacturers as the popularity of adventure biking exploded as the years progressed.

But which bikes stood out from the crowd as truly exceptional machines? And which left a two-wheeled shaped hole in our hearts after we handed the keys back to the manufacturer? Find out as we reveal ABR's list of the Top 10 Bikes of the Decade, starting with a motorcycle that revived two of the most iconic words in adventure biking history, Africa Twin.

HONDA AFRICA TWIN CRF1000L ►►

'You may be detecting a vibe I like the Africa Twin and you'd not be wrong. This is the most impressive big bore 'true' adventure bike I've ridden to date. Man, it even brought a smile to a drugged up old guy with a faltering back. Honda set out to produce a motorcycle that would do it all, and that's what it has achieved.'

ABR Publisher and Founder Alun Davies, 2015, issue 32

Honda awakened a sleeping giant in 2015 when it launched the all new Africa Twin CRF1000L, the first model to hold the iconic name since the popular XRV750 Africa Twin ceased production in 2003. The new bike's 'True Adventure' concept struck a chord with the motorcycle-buying public, offering a road-going adventure bike with genuine off-road chops. The CRF1000L proved hugely popular, and while it didn't quite knock the mighty BMW R 1200 GS off its sales perch, the new Africa Twin re-established Honda as a major player in the adventure biking world once again. **JO**





▲ HONDA GK1800 GOLDWING TOUR

'What if you have a spare £30,000 burning a hole in your pocket? Is it worth the money? If you want the ultimate two-up touring experience that money can buy, then the answer is a resounding yes. Your pillion will certainly thank you for it.'

ABR Assistant Editor James Oxley, 2019, issue 54

It's fair to say the Honda Goldwing has never been the coolest bike on the block. With its huge fairing, luxury comfort seats, and built-in luggage, it's a bike designed for practicality and comfort rather than sex appeal. There's also a wholesome quality about the Goldwing that makes it catnip for retired couples, rather than... anyone else. Well, that's what I used to think.

Aware of its image problem, Honda overhauled the Goldwing for 2018 in a bid to attract new and younger customers. The result was a sleeker, slimmer, sportier, and dare I say it, rather sexy motorcycle (particularly in the matte black colour option that makes it look like something the superhero Batman would ride).

I was lucky enough to spend 10 days touring Spain on the 2018 Goldwing Tour and it proved to be the most comfortable, capable, and enjoyable road touring bike I've ever ridden. It is an exceptional machine and my wife, who rode pillion for 2,000 miles behind me, wholeheartedly agrees. In fact, the Goldwing Tour is the king of two-up travel, a 'we bike' rather than a 'me bike' that glides along highways effortlessly in supreme comfort. And, while there's no getting away from the fact it's a big unit, the Goldwing proved to be more agile and fun to ride on the mountain passes of the Pyrenees than I expected. I wish I had one in my garage. **JO**



▲ BMW R 1200 GS

'The King has abdicated. All hail the more powerful, better-looking and, quite frankly, indisputable new King.'

ABR Publisher and Founder Alun Davies, 2013, issue 15

Love'em or hate'em (and we love them by the way), BMW's large capacity GS bikes have had a bigger impact on adventure motorcycling than any other machine, consistently outselling their rivals over the past decade. Some of that success can be attributed to the popularity of Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman's GS-starring *Long Way Round* television series, which catapulted the big adventure bikes into living rooms around the globe and inspired swathes of people go out and enjoy the pleasures of adventure biking, many of them choosing to do so on one of BMW's big adventure bikes, but as the saying goes, once you get to the top, it's even harder to stay there.

By 2013, the king of adventure bikes was showing signs of age. The pressure was on BMW's boffins to improve a genre-defining motorcycle that could fight off ever-increasing competition from rival manufacturers. So, in the spring of 2013, BMW unveiled a completely revamped R 1200 GS featuring a partly liquid-cooled boxer engine for the first time in GS history.

Barely a part went unchanged, with the new GS gaining an increase in power to 125bhp, better handling, a more comfortable ride thanks to semi-active suspension, and ride-by-wire throttle. In short, it was a sensational motorcycle that ensured the big GS continued its reign as the king of adventure bikes. **JO**



◀ DUCATI MULTISTRADA 1260 ENDURO

'The Multistrada 1260 Enduro is more refined, better designed, and easier to use than the 1200 on just about every level. But thankfully, Ducati has also managed to keep enough of the previous model's intoxicating power and undeniable presence to ensure there's still some of that teenager left. This bike rocks!'

ABR Bike Tester Julian Challis, 2019, issue 50

In 2016, Ducati launched the excellent but flawed Multistrada 1200 Enduro. It didn't sell in the numbers Ducati had hoped so its designers went back to the drawing board determined to make a bike that was more accessible and more refined. Boy, they pulled it off. With the launch of the Multistrada 1260 Enduro in 2018,

Ducati released one of the greatest adventure bikes ever made, and the ultimate portrayal of Ducati's 'four bikes in one' concept.

While it was easier to use and live with than the previous model, thanks to a lower seat, pegs, and bars, as well as a lower centre of gravity, the 1260 Enduro still retained the previous bike's raw power and undeniable presence. The superb balance and ergonomics made it a blast on and off road, long distances could be covered in supreme comfort, and the bike was refined enough to make urban commutes a relaxed affair. Perhaps most importantly, the good-looking 1260 Enduro possessed a star quality that turned heads and made me feel a million dollars everytime I rode it, and you can't put a price on that feeling. **JO**



▲ KTM 450 EXC

‘Currently, the EXC is the king of competition 450 enduro weapons. It’s fast, incredibly light, smooth and handles fantastically. It’s also a full-blown competition machine.’

ABR contributor Llewellyn Sullivan-Pavey, 2018, issue 49

While adventure and touring bikes dominate this list, we had to give a spot to the formidable KTM 450 EXC. Its torquey 50bhp engine, light handling, and superb suspension make it a joy to ride over the toughest of terrain, and while there’s plenty of power to thrill and terrify in equal measure, it’s also approachable enough to make an average rider look very good indeed.

A staple of KTM’s race-ready enduro range, the 450 EXC has featured in the Austrian manufacturer’s line-up since 2003 when it took over from the 400 EXC. However, KTM took the performance of the 450 up another notch in 2016 when it performed a dramatic overhaul of the bike. Redesigning everything, including a new chassis, engine, and suspension. It managed to not only trim 5kg off the weight, but also improve the ground clearance, and lower the seat height. This made the bike much more approachable for riders who wanted to put the 450’s off-road prowess to the test on green lanes, rather than a track.

The result was a bike that is as fun to ride as it is capable when the going gets tough. Whether we’re churning up mud on a green lane in winter or pushing the limit on an enduro track, the KTM has certainly earned its place on our top 10 list. **BD**



▲ HARLEY-DAVIDSON ULTRA LTD

‘If you regularly tour two-up and you want a bike that will keep your passenger as happy as possible, the Ultra Limited is as good a choice as any. The pillion’s perch is more like a comfy recliner, and out of all of the bikes that my partner has been my pillion on, the Ultra Limited has been her favourite by far. What’s that old saying? Happy pillion, happy life.’

ABR Editor Bryn Davies, 2019, issue 52

‘Hold on a second... why the bloody hell are you including a Harley-Davidson in the top 10 bikes of the decade?!’ I hear you cry. Calm down, there are perfectly good reasons for the inclusion. You see, in a particular niche, the Harley-Davidson Ultra Limited is king.

If you regularly ride long distances with a pillion, then both you and your passenger will love the Ultra Limited. Designed with the long, open roads of the US in mind, the Harley-Davidson Ultra Limited is a mile-munching monster. It’s big, it’s heavy and let’s be honest, it’s pretty ugly, but there are few bikes that are more comfortable over long distances than this (although James will fight the Goldwing’s corner, I’m sure).

Everything about it has been set up to provide the ultimate cross-country experience. The huge fairing deflects wind better than any other motorcycle I’ve ridden, the on-board entertainment system and speakers do wonders at breaking up the monotony of motorway miles, the luggage is well-incorporated and plentiful, and that saddle... You could fall asleep on it.

It’s not the most frugal on fuel, it’s not the most refined ride, and it’s an absolute pain in the arse to maneuver around tight roads and car parks, but if you take the Ultra Limited for what it is, you can’t help but love the experience. **BD**



◀ TRIUMPH TIGER 885

‘I’ve fallen for singles, romanced with twins, and had a few flings with fours but the sweet, sweet triple has me for life. It’s a common enough saying (and it’s true) that with a triple you get a mix of all that’s good about a twin and four-cylinder engine.’

ABR Publisher and Founder Alun Davies, 2010, issue two

Alun’s regular ride was a Triumph Tiger 885 triple when he first began to think a magazine called *Adventure Bike Rider* might not be such a bad idea. In fact, by the time the first issue was published, he owned three Triumph motorcycles: a Tiger 885, a Tiger 955i, as well as an 885 Sprint.

In that issue, Alun affectionately referred to the old carb Tiger 885 as the ‘Steamer’ and revealed that it ‘whipped the ass’ of the KTM 990 Adventure and BMW GS 800 that his mates were riding during a trip to the Dolomites. It also gave a Honda Fireblade a run for its money on a twisty mountain pass.

While the Tiger 885 has been superseded by new and improved machines over the past decade, it will always be the bike that Alun was riding when he had that lightbulb moment about starting *Adventure Bike Rider*, and that makes it very special motorcycle indeed. **JO**



▲ KTM 790 ADVENTURE AND ADVENTURE R

'The engine is powerful and flexible, the suspension faultless, the ergonomics effortless and the technology ties it all together to complete the package, regardless of whether you are a traveller that wants to go off road, or an off-roader who wants to travel. These bikes take adventure riding far beyond what is currently available from any manufacturer and have the potential to dominate the adventure travel market.'

ABR Bike Tester, Julian Challis, 2019, issue 52

For years, big adventure bikes ruled the roost and motorcycle sales charts, buoyed by the popularity of the large capacity BMW GS models. Manufacturers competed for our attention (and wallets) by developing larger, more powerful, more technically advanced motorcycles. However, while big adventure bikes remain a popular choice, mid-size machines have come to the fore in recent years with a slew of outstanding bikes hitting dealerships.

Among those were the KTM 790 Adventure and Adventure R variant. After four years of rumours, spy shots, and prototypes, excitement was at fever pitch for what became the most hotly anticipated adventure bike launch since Honda revived the Africa Twin in 2015.

The bike was certainly worth the wait, and while it may not be the best-looking machine around, it more than makes up for it in terms of performance on and off road. The 790 Adventure, and the off-road focussed R model, combine near perfect balance, a low centre of gravity, a feisty 95bhp engine specifically designed for the bike, long-distance comfort, agile handling, and a suite of rider aids that integrate seamlessly with the riding experience. Personally, it's the most capable all-round adventure bike I've ever ridden and my first choice for tours that involve riding on and off road. **JO**



▲ SUZUKI V-STROM 650 GT

'If you're into growing a beard and spending time riding in swamps and jungles, or if you can't live without the ability to blast past traffic in the blink of an eye, there are better bikes out there for you. But if you want a mid-range road-touring adventure bike that'll make your life in the saddle a calm and serene place to be, take a test ride on a Suzuki V-Strom 650.'

ABR Publisher and Founder Alun Davies, 2012, issue 11

As far as desirability goes, Suzuki has traditionally struggled when it comes to its adventure motorcycle range. Try as they might, the guys and girls behind the Japanese manufacturer can't seem to shake the 'steady eddy' image of both the 650 and 1000 V-Stroms. Even with 2020's offering of the 1050, which comes in a bright yellow colour scheme and is based on the legendary Dakar-ready DR Big, the Strom always comes across as more of a well-mannered accountant than a full-throttle rock star.

So, what on earth is the 2012 V-Strom 650 GT doing on this list of ABR's best bikes of the decade? Well it goes like this: as a mid-range, road-biased adventure motorcycle, the V-Strom 650 is arguably the best of the bunch.

Toss aside any expectations of an adrenaline-filled exploits and the V-Strom 650 ticks all of the boxes as a tourer, commuter, and weekend ride whether solo or riding with a pillion. As we wrote in issue 11 of ABR magazine, it's exactly the sort of bike you'd want your son or partner to ride. It's unthreatening, it's gentle, and it encourages slower speed travel where the ride is more about the places you're travelling through than the tarmac you're riding on. Pair all of that with its manageable size and low seat height (835mm), and the V-Strom is a pleasure to ride. **BD**



◀ YAMAHA TÉNÉRÉ 700

'Yamaha had stressed its desire to honour the Ténéré's heritage of almost 40 years and build the next horizon for the model. The team has achieved that and more, creating a truly impressive and enjoyable motorcycle that can hold its own against any bike within the adventure sector and beyond. The Ténéré is back!'

ABR Bike Tester Julian Challis, 2019, issue 53

After years of development, hype, and the odd delay, the Yamaha Ténéré 700 was revealed to an expectant public. Its predecessor, the popular XT660Z, had an

almost cult-like following of loyal fans across the globe so the pressure was on for Yamaha to emulate its success. And boy, did they do it, and then some.

Yamaha produced a motorcycle that took adventure biking back to basics, rejecting the race for ever more technologically advanced machines that its competitors were locked in. It's a simple, uncomplicated, perfectly balanced bike that performs equally well on and off the road. This less is more approach proved popular with bikers who parted with their hard-earned cash in their droves to bag a new model Ténéré. **BD**



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SUZUKI

V-STROM 1050XT

Will Sandilands swaps his top spec V-Strom for the standard model and discovers a little extra cash goes a long way

It may sound like a cliché but I didn't know what I had until it was gone. I'd just dropped my top spec Suzuki V-Strom 1050XT off for a service and I'd been loaned a standard model for a few days for me to ride instead.

At this point, let me say I've been loving every moment on the V-Strom, which is the first big bike I've ridden after graduating from the 650 model earlier this year. And, while I was grateful to the lovely folks at Suzuki for providing me with a loaner bike, I admit to becoming rather unsettled on the ride home.

I noticed the little things at first. As I checked for traffic behind me, I was met with a large functional mirror instead of the sleek, stylish design I was used to. I went to rest my feet on the engine bars but quickly realised they're not included with the standard V-Strom. Then I began to miss features that I'd previously taken for granted, like handguards, a quick-release adjustable screen, and even the look of the slimline LED indicators.

And then of course there are the rider aids. The XT model comes with extra good-

ies such as cruise control, cornering ABS, and hill hold control. They are all things I previously took for granted but quickly learned I'd come to rely on, particularly when I stalled as I pulled away from a set of traffic lights on a hill.

The chassis and engine of both V-Strom 1050 models are the same and they both feel lightweight for a big bike. The V-Strom has wonderfully flickable steering and enough power from its 105bhp engine to have a hell of a lot of fun in the saddle. They are both incredibly comfortable bikes too, featuring a relaxed upright seating position that I've been happy to spend many miles riding in. And, both bikes feature three rider modes, called A, B, and C, which are basically sport, touring, and rain modes.

To be honest, if you bought the standard version of the V-Strom 1050, you would be well served and you wouldn't know what you were missing out on, but I did. After having ridden the top spec XT version for a few months, I missed all those little details that add up to give the bike a premium feel, even down to how much cooler the spoked wheels of the XT look over the alloys on the standard bike. In short, it just didn't feel as special.

So, I'm left with the question, if I was to go out and buy a Suzuki V-Strom 1050 tomorrow, would I spend £9,999 on the stan-

dard model, or would I splash out an extra £1,300 to ride off on the XT version? The honest answer is I would dig a little deeper into my pockets and spend the extra cash. I know it's easy to say when I'm not actually handing over any money, but all those extra little details really do add up to make a very good bike an absolute belter. **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £11,299
- ✓ **ENGINE** 4-stroke, liquid-cooled, DOHC, 90-degree V-twin
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 1,037cc
- ✓ **OUTPUT** 106bhp @ 8,500rpm
- ✓ **TORQUE** 100Nm @ 6,000rpm
- ✓ **SUSPENSION** Front; 43mm inverted telescopic, coil spring, oil damped (160mm travel). Rear; Link type, coil spring, oil damped (160mm travel)
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front; Twin 310mm discs. Rear; Single
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 247kg (236kg on the standard 1050 model)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 20l
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 850mm-870mm



HONDA

CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS

Ollie Rooke hails the touring credentials
of Honda's flagship adventure bike

T

he Honda CRF1100L Africa Twin Adventure Sports features enough letters in its name to make Carol Vorder-

man giddy, so I'll apologise in advance for suggesting a couple more: GT, or Grand Tour. My reasoning is simple. The big adventure bike has proven to be a brilliant road tourer over the past couple of months.

So, what makes it so good? Well, the bike wafts along at motorway speed in a statesmanlike way, sitting planted on the road in a manner quite unlike any motorcycle I've ever ridden. It's undeterred by crosswinds or the turbulent air off lorries, and the huge 25l fuel tank allows for a 300 mile plus range, making covering big miles a hassle-free affair.

The sitting position (or throne, as Assistant Editor James called it after a blast down to Cornwall) is spot on for a six-footer such as myself and, combined with decent weather protection, helps make it the most comfortable bike I've ridden to date. The technology on the Adventure Sports also adds to the over-

all touring package on offer. While the words 'Apple CarPlay' will have purist's eyes rolling, it has been a revelation for me. By syncing the bike with my phone and Bluetooth headset, I can ride along listening to the cricket on the radio before flicking over to some music when the inevitable England batting collapse happens. Meanwhile, Google Maps appears as if by magic on the bike's large TFT screen to help me find my way.

Ok, I realise all this sounds rather distracting but it's not as bad as you might think. Once you get used to the initially daunting number of buttons on the left-hand switchgear, it actually becomes very intuitive and allows you to control all this technology with the flick of a thumb, without diverting much of my attention away from the road.

Is there anything I'd changed on the Adventure Sports to make an excellent long-distance touring bike even better? I've got my eye on an after-market comfort seat as the stock perch is a bit on the firm side for my liking. I'd also like a wider screen as I get a fair amount of turbulent air blowing onto my arms and shoulders. That's about it.

Ultimately, when it comes to tackling long distances, the Adventure Sports

is up there as one of the most capable bikes around. So, apologies to the easily tongue tied out there because the Honda CRF1100L Africa Twin Adventure Sports Grand Tour is here. **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £14,649 to £17,349
- ✓ **ENGINE** SOHC liquid-cooled 4-stroke, 8-valve parallel twin
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 1084cc
- ✓ **POWER** 101bhp @ 7,500rpm
- ✓ **TORQUE** 105Nm @ 6250rpm
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front: 310mm dual wave floating hydraulic disc with aluminium hub and radial fit 4-piston calipers and sintered metal pads. Rear: 256mm wave hydraulic disc with single piston caliper and sintered metal pads
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 238kg (DCT 248kg), with Showa EERA 240kg (DCT 250kg)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 24.8L
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 850/870mm (low seat option 825mm, high seat option 895mm)



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DUCATI

MULTISTRADA 1260 S GRAND TOUR

James Oxley experiences the thrill of riding the Multistrada and finds himself getting rather overexcited

R

iding the Ducati Multistrada 1260 S Grand Tour is a bit like having an orgasm while riding a rocket ship, or so I imagine. Rocket

ships are in short supply around these parts but I imagine riding one would be a thrilling experience, and the orgasm, well that's the cherry on top.

Luckily for me, I don't need the bank account of Elon Musk and a willing accomplice to experience such a feeling. I just swing my leg over ABR's Multistrada 1260 S Grand Tour long-term, fire up the engine and experience the visceral thrill of controlling 158bhp of pure pleasure between my legs.

Ok, this is all getting a bit X-rated but the Multistrada will do that to you. Ducati has an uncanny ability to take a hunk of metal and transform it into an object of pure desire, something elegant and sensual with curvaceous lines that can't help but plant a big silly grin on my face when I'm riding.

And even when I'm off the bike, I find myself smiling wistfully whenever I think about the Multistrada, like a teenage boy smitten by the girl next door (that's if the girl next door worked in the adult entertainment industry). But it's in riding the big Ducati that the pleasure truly

lies. Select sport mode, open the throttle, and make sure you hold on tight because you're about to experience a hit of power so intense you'd be forgiven for thinking you've been rear ended by lorry. I've genuinely screamed with delight as I've been catapulted up the road by the fury of that bone-shaking 1,263cc engine.

The more I ride the Multistrada 1260 S Grand Tour, the more intense I need those experiences to become, so much so that after a knacker 12-hour ride to and from Wales recently, I found myself carving through the Cotswold's close to home like a madman, desperately searching for more thrills before the ride ended.

However, all that pleasure came at a price. My body was in tatters because, despite the undeniable pleasure that riding a Multistrada brings, I find it a very uncomfortable bike over long distances. The seating position puts too much stress on my 6' frame, leaving my backside in agony, my arms aching, and my hands tingling. I continually bash my heels against the centre stand and exhaust cover, and my arms and shoulders get blasted with wind due to a narrow screen.

As touring bikes go, it's not particularly practical, which isn't a good sign for a bike with GT (Grand Tour) in its name. However, if it's practicality you want, I recommend heading straight down to your local Suzuki dealership and picking up a V-Strom 1050XT. It's a fantastic bike

designed with practicality in mind to make touring an effortless and enjoyable affair. But I suspect if you're in the market for a Ducati, practicality isn't top of your wish list. You yearn for power, performance, and knock your socks off thrills. You want to experience the mind-blowing pleasure of riding that rocket ship. You want a Ducati Multistrada 1260 GT. **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £18,895
- ✓ **ENGINE** 1,262cc Testastretta, L-Twin, liquid-cooled, 4 valves per cylinder
- ✓ **POWER** 158bhp @ 9500rpm
- ✓ **TORQUE** 129Nm @ 7500rpm
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front; Dual 330mm semi-floating discs, radially mounted Brembo monobloc M50 Evo 4-piston calipers, radial master cylinder, Cornering ABS. Rear; 265mm disc, 2-piston floating caliper, Cornering ABS
- ✓ **GEARBOX** 6-speed with Ducati Quick Shift up/down
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 215kg (dry)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 20L
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** Adjustable, 825 – 845mm

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YAMAHA

TÉNÉRÉ 700

Alun Davies is reclaiming his biking mojo on his long-term Yamaha Ténéré 700

If you've been keeping up on ABR events, then you'll be aware that I'm currently in recovery and re-discovery mode. This

stems from having had a serious high side two years ago followed by the debilitating onslaught and scary diagnosis of Acute Peripheral Arterial Disease last year.

The physical recovery is going just fine, the re-discovery is a little more complex and involves realigning my current emotional anxiety when riding a motorcycle with my cognitive thoughts and reassurances that all will be well.

It's taking more time than I thought to feel 'relaxed' and 'safe' whilst riding on two wheels. I'm also finding it a process I cannot push and just have to accept these feelings are valid and will take time to process – maybe I need to throw a leg over Dr Anthony Clare's Chaise Longue as opposed to the Ténéré.

Anyway, I had a breakthrough the other Sunday morning whilst out and about on my default route through the north Cotswolds. I became aware that, instead of grinding away at my teeth, a softening of the facial features was taking place. One of those man and machine in harmony moments was happening on the sweeping B4632 south of Stratford upon Avon. And I'm crediting the Ténéré 700 as the catalyst.

I recall chatting to Ted Simon a few years back and discussing his view that 50mph was the perfect touring speed. Ted reckoned that if you rode faster the emphasis became more on the road and less on the

environment you were riding through, for obvious reasons.

I agree wholeheartedly with this view and, having become more Ted and less Rossi of late, I'm finding the Ténéré to be the perfect companion on this journey. Whilst the 689cc parallel twin motor is more than capable of spinning up the thrills – as I discovered on the launch of the Tracer 700, which uses the same engine, during a furious soiree around the ultra-twisty mountain passes in the Italian Dolomites – it's also ideally suited for touring at Ted speed.

The calmer, lighter feel of the Ténéré is having a natural relaxing effect on my right wrist and I'm re-discovering the simple pleasures of riding. I had a similar feeling a few years ago on a Suzuki V-Strom 650 where the characteristics of riding a smaller capacity engine became more appreciated by the day.

I'm starting to observe more of the countryside, people and events from the seat of a motorcycle. And with that in mind, the combination of a high, comfortable, and commanding stance coupled with a suspension that feels like a magic carpet at undemanding speeds, the Ténéré is proving to be my perfect companion.

I'm not missing the power and performance of larger capacity machines, in fact I'm revelling in the slim, lightweight nipperiness and I'm thankful of the unthreatening nature of the 689cc power plant. I've also been impressed with the ride quality; it really is a very comfortable perch despite the seat being narrower than most.

As I've hinted above, I've also been impressed with the performance of the suspension which I've found to be supremely comfortable on all road surfaces,

eating up cracks, pot holes and undulations so competently that I found myself looking for tarmac imperfection rather than trying to avoid.

The smile that appeared on the B4632 also had me diverting off road and onto my old green lane stomping ground between Broadway and Bourton on the Water. Given my 'condition', I probably should not be venturing off road, but then a man's gotta do etc.

I've heard reports where riders are upgrading the suspension on the T7 and I can only assume that these riders are taking green lanes at serious speeds or upgrading because, well, because. I can tell you now, riding green lanes with 'Ted' mode engaged, the suspension is spot on, no upgrades needed there.

Until next time... **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £8,699
- ✓ **ENGINE** 2-cylinder, 4-stroke, liquid-cooled, DOHC, 4-valves
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 689cc
- ✓ **OUTPUT** 72bhp @ 9,000rpm
- ✓ **SUSPENSION** Front; KYB 43mm upside down, 210mm travel Rear; Sachs rear monoshock, 200mm travel
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front; 282mm twin-disc, Rear; Single 245mm disc
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 205kg wet
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 16L
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 880mm

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KTM

790 ADVENTURE

James Oxley takes a ride to the Peak District on the KTM 790 Adventure to test its two-up touring credentials

I

've spent the past few issues of *ABR* waxing lyrical about the joys of riding the KTM 790 Adventure. It's one of the most capable

all-round adventure bikes I've ridden and is vying for the top spot on my all-time favourite bike list, it really is that good.

I've ridden it over twisty mountain passes in the Alps, tackled green lanes along the Trans Euro Trail in England, and spent countless hours on the motorways of Britain clocking up more miles than I'd care to remember, and the bike has performed superbly throughout.

However, there is one important aspect of motorcycling that I hadn't experienced on the 790 Adventure until recently and that was two-up travel. There used to be a time when riding with a pillion was a seldom occurrence for me. My biking life was very much a solo affair apart from the odd occasion when a friend asked for a joy ride, or a stranded mate needed a lift.

This all changed when my wife, Karina, caught the motorcycle travelling bug during her maiden trip to the Alps a few years back, and commuting aside, I now spend just as much time riding with a pillion as I do without. So, for me to ever consider the 790 Adventure for a permanent spot in the Oxley garage, it would need to be comfortable for us both to ride two-up.

So, one Sunday, Karina and I took a ride to the Peak District National Park to find

out for ourselves. There would be four hours of motorway and A-road travel simply to get to the Peaks and back, plus plenty of riding in the park itself. If the KTM didn't perform as a two-up traveller, we'd know about it by the end of the day.

Mounting some of the taller adventure bikes as a passenger can feel like scaling a climbing frame, so I was pleased to see Karina hop on behind me with ease. The 790 Adventure isn't a tall bike and she appreciated the fact. We hit the road and soon discovered there is plenty of room for two onboard with wiggle space to spare. Karina found the foot pegs were in a comfortable position and appreciated the large grab rails. The KTM had got the thumbs up so far.

On the motorway, the 790 Adventure's 94bhp provided enough power to make cruising and overtakes pretty effortless. True, a more powerful engine tends to make two-up travel a more relaxed affair, but there were plenty of ponies in the KTM to enjoy the experience.

However, the front end of the bike felt rather light which only got worse as we delved into the twistier roads of the Peak District, including Winnats Pass and Snake Pass. Of course, I should have adjusted the suspension before we left home as I was riding with a pillion and a full set of metal luggage, but I've become lazy of late riding bikes with electronic suspension that adjusts at the touch of a button. And, to cap it off, I'd foolishly forgotten to take any tools with me on the ride.

So, I adjusted my riding style which included making a concerted effort not to

let the light frontend wheelie. Honestly, it wouldn't have taken much power to do so. I strongly suspect the problem would have been eradicated by a few clicks of the rear shock, and I'll let you know if it does the trick in a future issue.

This issue aside, Karina and I returned home from our day of riding in the Peaks very happy with how the KTM 790 Adventure performed. It's certainly comfortable and powerful enough to make two-up travel a pleasure and we both agreed we would be happy to tour on it abroad. Bring on the Alps. **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £11,099
- ✓ **ENGINE** 2-cylinder, 4-stroke, parallel twin
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 799cc
- ✓ **MAXIMUM POWER** 94bhp
- ✓ **SUSPENSION** Front; WP upside-down, 200mm travel. Rear; WP monoshock, 200mm travel
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front; 2x radially mounted 4 piston caliper, 320mm disc. Rear; 2 piston floating caliper, 260mm disc
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 850mm
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 189kg (dry)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 20L
- ✓ **FUEL CONSUMPTION** 68.9mpg (claimed)

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TRIUMPH

TIGER 900 RALLY PRO

Ollie Rooke swells with pride as his Tiger takes its first steps off road



T

here has been something in the water recently. A few weeks after ABR Editor Bryn had his first born, I found myself travelling

down to Folkestone to celebrate another new addition to the world with two of my close friends who had a baby of their own.

Personally, I'm yet to become a father, but as I set off down south, my mind wandered to the challenges that I'd face in the future as a new parent. The first day of school, first dates, and, of course, introducing my kids to the world of motorcycles. So, I started wondering, if my son or daughter was in the market for their first 'big' motorcycle, what would I recommend? Their old man would obviously point them firmly in the direction of an adventure bike, and a mid-capacity one at that, but that would lead them headfirst into one of the most hotly contested sectors of the market right now.

There are some cracking mid-weight adventure bikes around but I'd happily argue that the bike I found myself riding to Folkestone that day, the Triumph Tiger 900 Rally Pro, would be a worthwhile stop on any rider's adventure biking journey. Whether you're a seasoned overlander, stepping down from a larger capacity bike, or looking for buy your first 'big' bike, my reasoning is simple: The Rally Pro is a great all-rounder and so damn easy to ride.

With time to burn on my way to the coast, I followed a route down south that would prove my thesis on a selection of

roads that any adventure bike worth its salt would be fun to ride on. There were twisties in the Kent hills, some green lanes I'd researched in the ABR Digital Library, as well as a few A-roads and motorway blasts to make swift progress on.

Starting off on the motorway, the touring credentials of the Rally Pro were evident. The screen cuts through the air efficiently leaving little turbulent air in its wake. The triple-cylinder engine also provides enough top-end power for it to get a wriggle on in the fast lane during overtakes, and then some. Having said that, I did notice a some buzzing from the handlebars as I pushed the speedo up towards 5,500rpm in top gear, so much so my hands became numb. Sure, it only happened at high speeds, but it's something that will hamper all-day comfort for some riders.

In the twisties, the bike is nimble, zippy, and exciting to ride. However, I did notice some vagueness from the big 21-inch front hoop when I was pushing hard into tight corners. It's a self-inflicted compromise that comes with the specific off-road focus of the Rally Pro, but it's one I'm happy to make because boy, the Tiger is good off-road.

The handful of Kent byways I'd selected were made up of loose gravel, hard-packed dirt, as well as the tricky Trottscliffe steps. Despite sporting road-biased tyres, the bike instantly felt at home off road. The standing position was intuitive, the off-road traction control allowed me to kick out the back end without getting out of shape, and the off-road ABS allowed me to lock up and slide to a stop when required. The bike also took the 40 railway sleepers

of the Trottscliffe steps, each rising around 6-8' and covered in loose gravel, with the sure-footed prowess of a mountain goat.

As I arrived at my friend's house for the evening after a great day in the saddle, I felt like a proud parent myself as I checked out the Triumph for one final time. The Rally Pro is a proper all-rounder, nonchalantly soaking up everything I could throw at it without getting bent out of shape or leaving me feeling out of my depth. And, when it comes to an adventure bike, that's a hell of a quality. **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £13,100
- ✓ **ENGINE** Liquid-cooled, 12 valve, DOHC, in-line 3-cylinder
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 888cc
- ✓ **SUSPENSION** Front; Showa 45mm upside down forks, manual preload, rebound damping and compression damping adjustment, 240mm travel. Rear; Showa rear suspension unit, manual preload and rebound damping adjustment, 230mm wheel travel
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front; Twin 320mm floating discs, Brembo Stylema 4 piston Monobloc calipers. Radial front master cylinder, Optimised Cornering ABS. Rear; Brembo single piston sliding caliper
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 201 kg (dry)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 20 litres
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 850-870 mm



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HONDA

CRF450L

Julian Challis finds his farkling pays off on a journey along the Great Western Trail

N

o sooner had I put the CRF450L into the workshop for an ECU upgrade to improve the bike's performance, the world

ground to a halt. With no riding allowed, my beautifully prepped CRF450L enjoyed a somewhat enforced holiday. I finally retrieved the bike a few months later, and it has been an absolute joy to ride on the trails ever since.

The upgrade made a fantastic improvement. The low-level throttle response was just as gentle and usable on the tricky stuff, but the freer breathing and bigger hit of the new electronics gave the big Honda the boost it needed. Ok so it's still not like a 450 crosser, but that would be fairly annoying and impractical away from the racetrack. Armed with the new and improved CRF, I've enjoyed mile after mile of post-lockdown trail rides including fantastic jaunt on the Trans Euro Trail (TET)

Now originally, I'd planned to tackle the Great Western Trail section of the TET in two bites scheduled for April and June. With those dates in the bin due to world events, the lifting of some restrictions in early July meant that I could at least reschedule the Bristol to Land's End section. A small flurry of emails, phone calls

and deliveries saw a collection of parts to complete the preparations for the trip. First up were the rather wonderful Bark Busters that came from R&G. It's not a supplier I'd normally associate with off-road kit but it was able to provide some gorgeous red and white guards supported by an alloy frame.

Second was a new chain to replace the stock Honda item, which like most Japanese OEM off-road chains, seems to be made of metal coloured liquorice. Classic Enduro came up with a suitable RK X-ring replacement which. At much the same time, Dunlop had sent me some new dual sport hoops in the form of a monster D908 Rally Raid for the rear and a D606F at the front. As the rear was quite so chunky and I hate changing tyres on the roadside, I had a mousse fitted at the back and a heavy-duty tube at the front. The final step was a filter and oil change.

So, how did the Honda CRF450L cope in its new role as an adventure bike on the Great Western Trail? Pretty damn perfect I'd say. The new hopped-up engine allows you to conquer everything from the trickiest trails to the fastest dirt roads with ease, and on the blacktop, that extra oomph is good for motorway speeds and beyond, assisted by my Skidmarx screen, pin sharp handling and super sticky tyres. The luggage proved to be excellent, the navigation system worked well, and the sun shone for almost all of the journey.

Next up, I'm planning to embark on a northern caper where I'll ride coast to coast, which is a journey planned for before the nights start to close in. I'll travel from Whitby to Morecambe and back with the boys from the Trail Riders Fellowship. Gentlemen, please start your engines. This may get messy! **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £9,469
- ✓ **ENGINE** liquid-cooled, single-cylinder, four-stroke unicam
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 449cc
- ✓ **MAXIMUM POWER** 24.6 bhp
- ✓ **SUSPENSION** Front; fully-adjustable 49mm leading-axle inverted telescopic Showa coil-spring 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** 131kg (wet)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 7.6 litres
- ✓ **TANK RANGE** 110 miles
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 940mm



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GEAR IN FOCUS: COOL COVERS

OLLIE ROOKE DISCOVERS THE SECRET TO ACHIEVING A COOL, DRY BACKSIDE ON A MOTORCYCLE DURING A VISIT TO COOL COVERS HEADQUARTERS

For John Small, founder of motorcycle accessories company Cool Covers, fiddling around with an old sewing machine wasn't quite what he'd expected from the adventure biking lifestyle. As a GS Trophy finalist and a successful adventure tour operator, he suddenly found himself sat in his garage at home getting closely acquainted with the art of stitching as he made his first batch of Cool Covers in 2018.

He laughs as he tells the story: "I was self-taught as I looked at how to strip the needles and clean it all. Luckily, I don't mind getting stuck in, but I've got these big hands and I was fiddling around with these little tiny screws."

Despite the challenges, it's safe to say John learnt quickly, and Cool Covers went from small beginnings to a successful brand with a dedicated headquarters in Ledbury, Herefordshire. But what exactly is a Cool Cover? The concept is simple enough. It's a mesh seat cover that slips over a stock motorcycle seat and allows airflow to keep your backside cool when the temperature rises. It also allows rainwater to drain away, keeping your bum dry in the wet.



JOHN FITS A COOL COVER TO THE AFRICA TWIN

John says: "The Cool Cover is custom designed to fit your seat well. It's 98% permeable so you're sat on a barrier which is allowing ventilation to provide the cooling effect in hot weather. If it's raining, you get the water running through so you're not going to get a wet arse. We also get a lot of feedback from people saying they can go big distances without getting fatigue which is due to the massage effect and dampening system (of the mesh)."

John added: "I initially felt it was just an endurance product for the adventure bike rider. At that point, I didn't particularly see it on your other bikes. It was there to help you do 200-300 miles in a day, sometimes without a stop, and that's where we saw that it really worked."

However, those first few adventure biking customers found their riding friends were becoming jealous of their cool, dry backsides, while they contended with heatwaves and British storms. It's this word of mouth that has been key to the growing success of Cool Covers, with John recently signing a deal with KTM for Cool Covers to be sold as an official KTM Powerpart throughout the world.

John recalls a conversation with one customer: "This guy called and said his mate had bought a Cool Cover from me. They were from Dover so you can imagine, wherever they wanted to go in the UK, it's going to be a long ride. His mate was always the one who wanted to stop first, but since he bought the Cool Cover he never wants to stop, so the guy I was talking to wanted to buy one for himself!"

"Ultimately, that's why I started Cool Covers two years ago. As a biker myself, I'm promoting and selling something that people genuinely see as benefiting their motorcycling experience."

A quick glance at the comments on Cool Covers' website tells you that John isn't the only one to feel that way. I have to say I agree, and I've been loving having a cool, dry bottom thanks to the Cool Cover on my bike this summer. **ABR**



CASUAL RIDING SHOES

JAMES OXLEY AND OLLIE ROOKE PUT 12 PAIRS OF RIDING SHOES TO THE TEST TO HELP YOU STAY SAFE AND LOOK STYLISH ON AND OFF THE BIKE

W

hether you're climbing a twisting mountain pass, or cruising along a picturesque coastal highway, there's no doubting the joy of motorcycling. Even scything through traffic on a busy A-road brings a sense of satisfaction only a biker can know.

Personally, motorcycling has opened up a world of possibilities, new friends, and adventures I simply wouldn't have experienced if I hadn't made the decision to take my bike test.

However, on a day-to-day basis, motorcycling can also be an absolute faff. In the mornings, by the time I've packed a change of clothes for work, put on all my bike gear, and wheeled my motorcycle out of the garage, I could have driven halfway to the office already. Then there's the awkwardness of meeting friends and family in a pub or restaurant while stomping around in sweaty adventure boots and a thick textile riding suit.

If these scenarios sound familiar, you'll likely welcome anything that makes your biking life more convenient and comfortable. With this in mind, in the previous issue of *ABR* we reviewed 14 pairs of riding jeans, and in the making of this issue, we have put 12 pairs of casual riding boots under the microscope to pair with those jeans.

WHAT ARE CASUAL RIDING BOOTS?

The term 'casual' may sound wide-ranging but we've focused on footwear specifically made for motorcycling, with all the safety elements you would expect in a pair of riding boots, but which have been designed with casual use off the bike in mind too. We're talking about a pair of boots you'd be comfortable wearing with jeans to a pub, restaurant, or a dress down Friday at the office, as well as on your bike. Unsurprisingly then, the majority of boots on test wouldn't look out of place on your average high street

shoe rack, with manufacturers like Oxford Products and TCX producing classic leather lace-up boots. Others, like Ducati and Alpinestars, have gone for a sportier look by designing lightweight racing-style footwear, while REV'IT!'s entry into this group test stands alone as an ankle-length adventure touring boot with rugged good looks to match.

STYLE ICON

So, you've made the decision to invest in a pair of casual riding boots, but what specifically should you look for? There are three main qualities to keep in mind. Style, comfort, and protection. Let's begin with style. We all want to look good when we're riding which is one of the reasons we buy casual riding gear in the first place, whether it's a pair of boots, jeans, or a jacket. If it doesn't look good, we're not going to get much wear out of it.

With this in mind, give some thought to the style of boot you're looking for. If you'll be wearing them on weekend rides with mates, a pair of casual riding trainers like BMW's Dry Sneakers could be perfect. However, if you're planning to wear them to the office, smarter-looking footwear like Oxford Product's Digby boot would be a better choice.

IF THE BOOT FITS

Once a pair of boots has caught your eye, it's time to figure out how comfortable they are to wear. You can buy the most expensive, feature-laden footwear available, but if the boot doesn't fit, your feet will suffer on and off the bike. Keep in mind that people's feet come in all different shapes and sizes, and so do motorcycle boots. Sizing varies between manufacturers considerably, with footwear made in northern Europe often being wider at the bridge of the foot than boots made in southern parts of the continent.



Try on plenty of pairs, ensure they fit the shape of your foot, and keep in mind your feet will swell up when it gets hot, so leave room for this. You'll also spend more time walking around in a casual boot than you generally would in full-length touring or adventure footwear, so it's important that they feel light and flexible. If they don't, travelling on foot will soon become a chore. However, they also need to retain enough rigidity to protect you in the event of accident on the bike, but more on that later.

Make sure you give some thought to the fastening system you'd like to use on your new boots. Spending time bent over double while lacing up a hiking-style boot adds to the faff of motorcycling (and we're looking to avoid this). However, many of the boots on test combine laces with a zip opening, so once you've set the lace tension to your liking, you don't need to touch them again. Other footwear we've tested utilises a Velcro fastener which scores top marks for ease of use but won't give you the classic styling of a leather lace-up boot. We've also tested boots with buckles and even a BOA system with stainless steel laces. Which fastening system you choose will depend on your personal preferences when it comes to style and convenience, so try out a selection before you buy to find out which you prefer.

THESE BOOTS WERE MADE FOR RIDING

So, you've found a pair of boots that look good and fit perfectly, but what about safety? These boots were made for riding after all so they need to offer protection in the event of a crash. From the start, it's important to understand that you're going to be sacrificing an element of safety for style and comfort. Casual riding footwear won't offer as much protection as a full-length adventure or touring boot, so I wouldn't recommend wearing them on long-distance motorway journeys, or venturing off road. Most of the boots on

test were designed for riding around town at lower speeds, and the amount of protection they offer reflects this, aside from REV'IT's more adventurous Pioneer H20.

Despite this, the boots you buy should have a CE safety certificate and feature certain protective features you'll find in any riding footwear. They should have ankle protectors, as well as a heel cup and a toe box. As a rule, a stiffer boot will offer more protection so look for a reinforced sole that's difficult to bend and twist, but keep in mind they need to be flexible and comfortable enough to walk around in.

Generally speaking, casual riding boots tend to be worn in the warmer months, but riding in the UK means you need to be prepared for a downpour at any time of the year. A boot with a waterproof membrane, like Gore-Tex, is the most effective way to keep the rain out but this will lead to them feeling stuffy when the mercury rises. Manufacturers like to make a song and dance about the breathability properties of waterproof membranes, but the reality is a waterproof boot will feel warmer than one that isn't. However, I'd prefer warm, dry feet than cold, wet ones.

Two other features to look out for when you're browsing for new boots are a gear shifter pad, to protect the leather or textile material of your boot, and a lace cover that will stop your laces unraveling and getting tangled in the workings of your motorcycle.

THE RIGHT BALANCE

As with any new item of motorcycle clothing, there is plenty to consider when buying a pair of casual riding boots. Style, comfort, and safety all need to be balanced with the type of riding and activity off the bike you're going to be doing. Over the coming pages you'll find reviews of 12 boots to help you enjoy faff-free motorcycling while looking good on and off your motorcycle. **ABR**



Kurkbury Outlast Motorcycle Jacket

£279.99

Halley Stevenson 80z Cotec Fabric

Outlast Removable Thermal Liner

Reissa Waterproof Membrane

D30 Shoulder & Elbow Protectors

Short Connecting Zip



Flood Waterproof Rainsuit

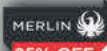
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ANATOMY

OF A CASUAL RIDING BOOT

FASTENING

Traditional laces combined with a zip or Velcro fastener is commonplace and combines a casual shoe style with ease of use. Some boots solely use a Velcro fastener while others utilise a BOA system featuring steel laces.

HEIGHT

Casual riding boots, whether in a trainer or fashion boot style, tend to be shorter than a regular motorcycle touring or adventure boot. Generally speaking, this makes them lighter, cooler, and more comfortable to wear, particularly when walking around off the bike. On the flip side, they won't offer the shin protection of a taller boot, and any waterproof lining will end at, or just above, the ankle.

LACES COVER

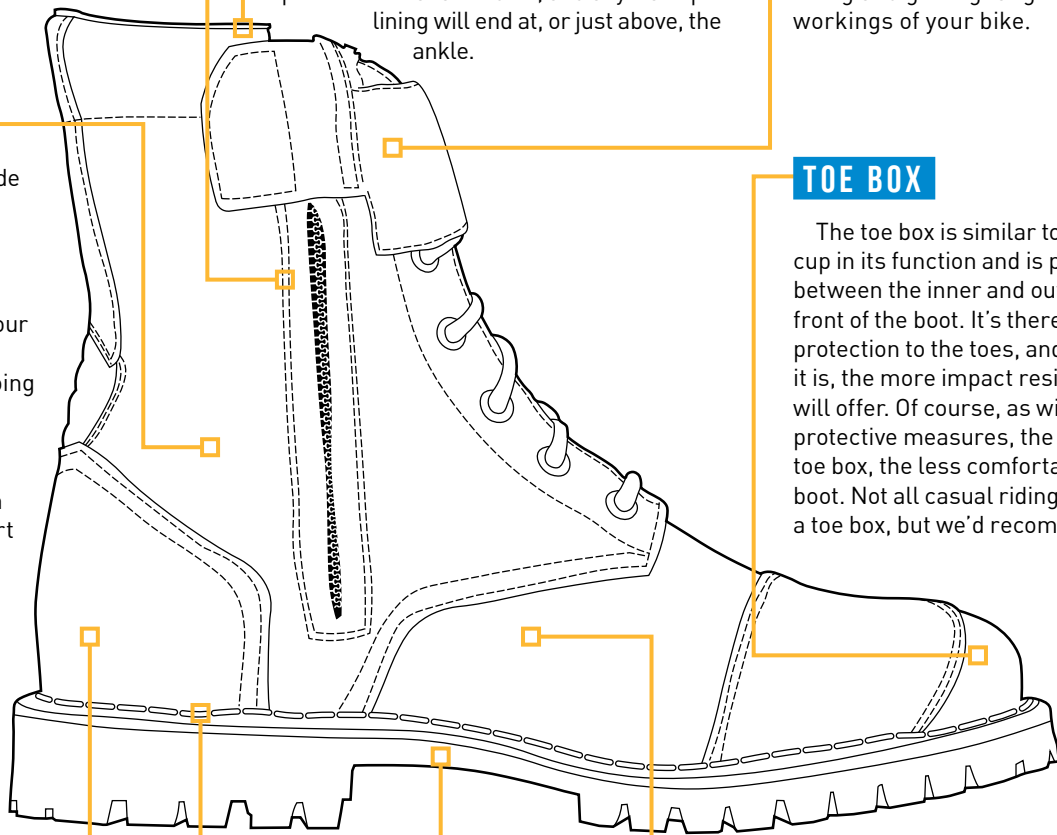
This is a small strap, usually made of leather, that stretches across the front of your boot to secure your laces' knot in place, usually using a Velcro fastener. If your laces were to come undone, the cover would stop them unravelling and getting tangled in the workings of your bike.

ANKLE INSERTS

These will provide ankle support and protection if you crash or the bike lands on you. The more protection your boot has, the less comfortable it's going to be, but even in a casual boot, it's important to have some protection in this vulnerable part of your body.

TOE BOX

The toe box is similar to the heel cup in its function and is placed between the inner and outer at the front of the boot. It's there to provide protection to the toes, and the stiffer it is, the more impact resistance it will offer. Of course, as with other protective measures, the stiffer the toe box, the less comfortable the boot. Not all casual riding boots have a toe box, but we'd recommend one.



HEEL CUP

The heel cup is a piece of moulded plastic that has been placed between the inner and the outer of the boot. Its job is to keep the foot in place and prevent it from lifting when walking. If it fails to do this, then you can expect an increase in the likelihood of blisters when walking, and a decrease in control when on the bike.

SOLE

Consider the sole of your boots as if they're tyres on a bike. If you're predominantly riding on road, you wouldn't put knobbles on your wheels, and vice-versa. Generally speaking, casual boots are designed for urban riding and walking, so you won't need an aggressive tread designed to grip in wet, muddy conditions, unless that's the style you're going for. The sole can be glued or stitched to the upper, and a combination of both is ideal.

FOOTBED

Also known as the insole, the purpose of a footbed is to aid comfort by providing additional padding from hard ground and to absorb any vibes from the pegs of your bike. Footbeds are removable, which is good news, as those supplied as standard aren't always top quality.

WATERPROOF LINING

Leather is water-resistant rather than waterproof, as are most synthetics. What keeps your foot dry is a waterproof lining, a well-known one being Gore-Tex. Linings are marketed as waterproof and breathable, but in reality, there are usually too many factors compromising the breathability of a boot for them to stop you getting soggy socks from sweat. Wherever there is armour, or wherever there has been plastic moulded to the boot, breathability will be inhibited. Similarly, if the outer fabric becomes waterlogged or dirty, breathability will be negatively impacted.

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AKITO CITIZEN BOOTS

£69.99

WWW.JSACCESSORIES.CO.UK

British brand Akito specialises in producing motorcycle gear for riders on a budget and its entry into this group test, the Citizen boot, is the least expensive on test at £69.99. Can it punch above its price tag? Let's find out.

The Citizen is a mid-height, lace-up, trainer boot made from nubuck leather, and it looks like it would be at home on any high street shoe rack. In fact, there's nothing to suggest this isn't a 'regular' casual boot apart from branded ankle protectors. On looks alone, I'd be happy to combine it with a pair of jeans while zipping around town at the weekend.

The Citizen slipped on easily, but once it was on, it somehow managed to feel tight and loose at the same time. Let me explain. As I walked around town, or placed my feet on my bike's foot pegs, my heel raised up inside the boot substantially but the boot also felt tight around the bridge of my foot and toes. It was a rather uncomfortable experience exacerbated by an ankle protector that dug into my skin. With all this in mind, I certainly recommend trying the boot on before you buy to ensure you don't have the same issues.



The Citizen is advertised as being fully waterproof but one of the boots I tested leaked water during a submergence test. In terms of protection, the Citizen feels stiffer than the other trainer-style boots on test, the BMW Dry Sneaker and the Alpinestars J-6 Waterproof Shoe, with a sole that's relatively hard to twist and bend, at least for a trainer boot. However, the limited protection provided by trainer-style boots in general means I wouldn't want to wear them for anything other than low speed

riding around town, and I would fear for my feet if I was to come off a bike while wearing them at high speeds.

With this in mind, if you're comfortable sacrificing an element of safety for style and comfort, the Citizen is an affordable and good-looking option for riders on a budget. **JO**

IN A LINE: A lightweight, trainer-style boot at a budget price, with some comfort issues.

ABR RATING
6/10

STYLE	7
COMFORT	5
PROTECTION	6
VALUE FOR MONEY	6

LINDSTRANDS DRIZZLE

£129

WWW.LINDSTRANDSMC.COM

Lindstrands began making motorcycle clothing back in the '50s and it knows a thing or two about producing high-quality bike gear that can withstand the notoriously severe Scandinavian climate. However, it could do with having a rethink about its naming policy.

Drizzle may well be the most uninspiring name for a piece of motorcycle clothing I've ever come across, but don't let that put you off Lindstrands' entry into this group test. Despite the dreary moniker, the Drizzle is a damn fine-looking piece of motorcycling footwear. In fact, I'd go as far as saying it's the best-looking boot on test thanks to its use of nubuck leather to produce a brushed, almost velvet-like surface, on a classic good looking lace-up boot.

But the beauty of the Drizzle isn't only skin deep. Put them on and they feel soft and flexible to walk around in while proving stiff enough to provide plenty of support for your feet on the bike. The chunky, aggressive tread on the sole also gives plenty of grip on the pegs, as well as on the pavement.

The Drizzle boots are fastened using laces which meant they weren't as quick to slip on an



off as many of the other boots on test that use a combination of laces and a zipper. They also have a rather narrow entry point which meant I had to give them a good tug to get them on, but once they were on my feet, they felt great. The laces are held in place by a Velcro cover to ensure they don't get tangled in the workings of your motorcycle if they come undone.

To keep you dry when it rains, the boots feature a waterproof and breathable Dryway membrane which enabled the Drizzle to pass our

submergence test. Protection comes in the form of toe and heel cups and ankle protectors, as well as a steel shank sole insert which resulted in the boot being reassuringly difficult to bend and twist.

Overall, the Lindstrands Drizzle is a stylish, comfortable, and well-made piece of footwear that I've enjoyed wearing on an off the bike. **JO**

IN A LINE: A good looking boot with the comfort and quality to match. At £129 it's a bit of a steal.



ABR RATING
9/10

STYLE	9
COMFORT	8
PROTECTION	8
VALUE FOR MONEY	9

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RST ROADSTER II WATERPROOF BOOT

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WWW.RST-MOTO.COM

Harking back to an era when Harrington-wearing skinheads were bopping along to Northern Soul, RST's entry into this group test, the Roadster II Waterproof Boot, comes with a familiar British style that will perform as well around town or in the office as it will in the saddle.

British-based itself, RST has been producing competitively priced gear for more than 30 years and frequently performs well in ABR group tests. With this in mind, I was intrigued to see if the Roadster II continued that trend.

Like many other mid-height boots on test, the Roadster II disguises its true function as a motorcycling boot, with the gear-shifter panel present on each toe the only obvious sign it is designed for motorcyclists. The Roadster II is made from full-grain cowhide and features a rugged look similar to that of a work boot.

It also features a reinforced toe-box, plus heel and integrated ankle protection, as well as a polycarbonate anti-twist shank to ensure there is as much protection as you can expect from a casual boot. The deep tread and anti-slip sole will help you paddle the bike around tarmac and gravel carparks with ease. The boot also features



ABR RATING

7/10

STYLE	8
COMFORT	7
PROTECTION	7
VALUE FOR MONEY	7

a Hipora waterproof lining, although it did leak slightly when put through our submersion test. This is particularly disappointing considering RST chose to use the word 'waterproof' in the name of the boot.

Despite this, the Roadster II was comfortable to wear from the off, requiring little breaking in. However, after wearing these regularly over the last few months they've aged pretty poorly, scuffing up against my bike's gear lever and brake pedal around the

toes, which is disappointing to see. The laces are also a slight annoyance. I know other RST boots feature a side zip and I wish it was present here, so I didn't have the hassle of lacing them every time I put them on. **OR**

IN A LINE: Rugged looks, solid protection, and a competitive price, but let down by lack of waterproofing.

OXFORD PRODUCTS DIGBY SHORT BOOTS

£129.99

WWW.OXFORDPRODUCTS.COM

Oxford Products began life in 1973 when owner and chairman Alec Hammond began selling top boxes out of the back of his car. Almost half a century later the British firm is now a hugely popular brand, selling in 90 countries. Its product line spans pretty much every motorcycle accessory you can think of, helping Oxford Products build a reputation for consistently making good-quality gear that punches well above its price tag, offering great value for money.

Its entry into this group test is the Oxford Digby Short Boot and immediately it stands out as the most formal piece of footwear on test. In fact, on looks alone, there is nothing to suggest this is anything other than a 'regular' short, lace-up, leather boot, apart from a slight bulge at each ankle where protective inserts have been placed. It's a piece of footwear I'd be happy to wear with a suit to work or with jeans at a restaurant.

The Digby does feel stiff when you slip it on for the first time, but wear it in over a few days and weeks, and the leather will soon loosen up. There's enough flexibility in the sole to make walking around comfortable enough but I did find that one of the metal lace hook dug into the top of



ABR RATING

7/10

STYLE	8
COMFORT	6
PROTECTION	6
VALUE FOR MONEY	7

my ankle which proved rather uncomfortable on and off the bike. Opting for a size up may solve this problem, but it's worth keeping in mind.

The boot is waterproof thanks to the presence of a Hipora waterproof and breathable membrane which passed our submergence test with ease. Inside the Digby is a cushioned inner sole with an antibacterial treatment designed to reduce pongs. The boots are fastened with laces and nothing more which helps give their classic styling. Protection comes in the form of toe and

heel cups as well as a reinforced sole. The result is a reassuringly stiff boot that's hard to twist and bend. However, the fact this is a short boot means your ankle will be at greater risk of injury than if you were wearing something taller with more support. That said, if you're in the market for a short, formal riding boot, the Oxford Digby is worth considering. **JO**

IN A LINE: Good looks make it ideal for formal wear but not the most comfortable.

DUCHINNI CANYON

£139.99

WWW.THEKEYCOLLECTION.CO.UK

Duchinni may have a distinctly Italian sounding name but it is in fact a British-based brand which launched in 2004. It specialises in designing and selling motorcycle boots, gloves, helmets, jackets, and trousers at affordable prices.

Its entry into this group test is the Duchinni Canyon casual riding boot. It's a leather, mid-height, lace-up boot, that reminds me of a hiking boot and comes in just one colour, a rather fetching brown.

The Canyon is fastened using laces and a zipper so after you've set the lace tension you desire, you can slip the boot on and off using the zipper, which cuts down on faff time. Once on my feet, the Canyon felt soft and flexible thanks in part to a cushy padded inner liner. However, the boot did feel baggy around my ankle which resulted in my heel lifting further off the inner sole than I would have liked when walking. My feet also heated up very quickly while off the bike, even when I was simply sat down in the office.

Duchinni market the boots as waterproof but our test pair didn't pass our submergence test, with water leaking throughout the boot.



ABR RATING
6/10

STYLE	7
COMFORT	5
PROTECTION	5
VALUE FOR MONEY	5

The leather also remained saturated for a number of hours after the test, which means if you ride for any length of time in the rain, you're going to get soggy, cold feet. I also have some concerns about the Canyon's build quality as, on both left and right boots, the sole began to peel away from the upper without too much encouragement.

In terms of protection, the Canyon features heel and toe cups, as well as ankle inserts. However, the boots are easy to bend and twist

by hand which would concern me if I was to have a high-speed crash.

Overall, I was disappointed by the Duchinni Canyon. At this price point I would expect to see better build quality and proper waterproofing. **JO**

IN A LINE: A good-looking casual riding boot but lacking the build quality or comfort to match the price.

DUCATI CORSE CITY BOOTS

£149

WWW.DUCATIUK.COM

Ducati's DNA is steeped in motorcycle racing history and even its popular adventure bikes, the Multistrada 1260 and 950, are on the sporty end of the adventure spectrum. So, it should come as no surprise that the Italian manufacture's entry into this group test has a sporty look.

The Corse City Boot is actually made by TCX and branded with Ducati logos, but despite the racing look, it's been designed with urban riding and short weekend blasts in mind. However, there's no disguising it is made for motorcycling, and for Ducati enthusiasts in particular.

The Corsa City is predominantly made from chamois leather and features a soft inner lining, including a plush mesh fabric around the ankles which feels nice and cosy. The boots are lightweight and comfortable to wear although they are on stiff side. Personally, I prefer the support a stiffer boot provides while riding, but the Corse City is just about flexible enough to make walking a comfortable experience, although I wouldn't want to venture too far.

I was also a fan of the non-slip rubber sole, which is was so grippy, it was almost sticky and provided excellent grip on the pegs. However, it



ABR RATING
7/10

STYLE	6
COMFORT	7
PROTECTION	7
VALUE FOR MONEY	7

does have an extremely shallow tread pattern so be sure to take extra care if you walk around on loose surfaces. The boots are easy enough to slip on although it would have been nice to see the inclusion of a zip opening to avoid the hassle of lacing them up.

In terms of protection, the Corse City features reinforced heel and toe cups and the boot felt stiff enough to reassure me my feet would be well protected if I was to crash at low speeds. There are also sliders on the front left of each boot for those

of you who like to scrape their pegs on the way to work. Your feet will also stay dry on rainy days thanks to a waterproof lining that had no problems passing our submergence test.

If you ride a Ducati and want a casual riding boot featuring plenty of branding in a sporty style, the Corse City will do a good job, but I'd recommend taking a change of shoes to the office. **JO**

IN A LINE: A lightweight and comfortable boot in a sporty style for Ducati enthusiasts.



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ALPINESTARS J-6 WATERPROOF SHOES

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WWW.ALPINESTARS.COM

In 1963, Sante Mazzarolo, a leather craftsman by trade, turned his attention to the rapidly growing motorcycle industry and began making motocross boots. Some 60 years later his company, Alpinestars, has diversified its offerings to cover a huge range of motorcycle clothing.

Its entry into this group test is the J-6 Waterproof Shoe. It's one of the most casually styled boots on test and will appeal to those who don't want to look as if they've arrived at their destination by bike, but still require the protection a riding shoe will bring. Having said that, the trendy styling is best suited for trips to town or relaxed evenings out and would look out of place in a formal office.

You'll have no regrets if you do decide to wear them all day though, as they are extremely comfortable. In fact, they excel compared to some of the more rigid leather boots on test, thanks to padding on the plush leather tongue and in the heel, as well as featuring a soft footbed.

The boots also boast a waterproof membrane which was up to the task of keeping my feet dry during a heavy deluge



and passed our submergence test. However, much like other trainer-style boots on test, the J-6 does fall a little short when it comes to protecting your feet.

While the reinforced midsole feels robust and substantial, the dual density padding on the ankle and heel doesn't, and the internal toe box is so small it failed to cover my toes. They are also easily bent and twisted. With this in mind, I'd be uneasy wearing the Alpinestars J-6 on anything other than low speed trips.

ABR RATING

7/10

STYLE	7
COMFORT	8
PROTECTION	6
VALUE FOR MONEY	7

All in all, these boots would be a good choice for riders who are prepared to compromise over protection to own a comfortable and stylish riding trainer for urban rides that disguises its true purpose as a piece of motorcycle clothing. **OR**

IN A LINE: A comfortable waterproof trainer, the J-6 is at home around town but lacks protection for other types of riding.

DAINESE DOVER GORE TEX SHOES

£179.95

WWW.DAINESE.COM

In 1968, Lino Dainese travelled to London on a Vespa and caught site of the leather-clad ton-up boys on the city's streets. Inspired by what he saw, he produced his first piece of bike clothing four years later, a pair of riding trousers. Since then, the Italian manufacturer has become one of the world's leading motorcycle brands, famed for producing high-quality, protective clothing with plenty of Italian flare.

That flare is on display in the Dover Gore-Tex Shoe which is a trainer-style mid-height boot made of cowhide suede. I'd suggest the trendy styling is aimed at younger riders and, as someone nearing my 40th birthday, I fear I may have a few too many wrinkles to pull them off.

However, if the look does appeal to you, you're in for a treat because there is a lot to like about the Dover boots. Slipping them on is a quick and easy affair thanks to a large Velcro fastener which combines with a nifty speed lacing system. Simply pull a tab and it tightens the lace without the hassle of tying a knot. Inside the boot is a soft inner liner with padding around the opening which makes the Dover very comfortable to wear. The sole is flexible enough to feel like you're



walking around in a regular pair of trainers, but there was still enough support for the boots to feel comfortable on the pegs. Waterproofing is provided by a breathable Gore-Tex membrane which passed our submergence test.

You'll be compromising on safety in favour of style and comfort with a trainer boot, so riding at motorway speeds isn't recommended. The Dover does feature ankle inserts but I would like to have seen a toe and heel cup for added protection. The skate-shoe style sole has an extremely shallow

tread pattern which was fine on the pavement but take care if you end up paddling a heavy bike on slippery or loose surfaces while wearing them.

Overall, the Dover Gore-Tex is a very well made and thoughtfully designed piece of footwear. If you think you can pull off the look, it's a riding trainer worth investing in. **JO**

IN A LINE: Comfort, quality, and ease of use combine with distinctive styling for urban use.

ABR RATING

7/10

STYLE	7
COMFORT	8
PROTECTION	6
VALUE FOR MONEY	7

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BMW DRY SNEAKER

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It's well known that BMW is a purveyor of some of the world's finest motorcycles, but did you know the German manufacturer also sells a range of branded bike gear? Over the past few years, BMW has scored consistently highly in group tests for style, comfort, and protection in ABR reviews and it is looking to continue this trend with the Dry Sneaker.

As the name suggest, this is a trainer-style boot and a stylish one at that. The white rubber outsole combined with black and green roughened leather results in a good-looking piece of footwear that could easily be mistaken for a 'regular' trainer boot. Only the gear shifter pad and the combination of laces and a discreet zipper giveaway the fact this boot was made for riding, along with the subtle BMW branding.

Just like a 'regular' trainer, the Dry Sneaker also feels lightweight and comfortable to wear. Inside is a plush padded liner, and outside, the supple leather is more than flexible enough to ensure walking around off the bike is a comfortable experience. On the bike, I would have preferred more support on the pegs to aid comfort, particularly for longer distance rides, but the Dry Sneaker was designed with short urban



ABR RATING
7/10

STYLE	8
COMFORT	7
PROTECTION	6
VALUE FOR MONEY	6

journeys in mind, and for this use, they felt fine. However, the shallow tread pattern on the soles resulted in my feet slipping off my bike's pegs in the wet. BMW's own waterproof and breathable Climate Membrane lining kept my feet dry in the rain and the boot passed our submergence test.

In terms of protection, there are reinforced heel and toe cups, as well as ankle guards. However, this all feels rather lightweight and flexible for my liking. While all casual riding boots, and trainers in particular, require you to compromise on safety

in favour of style and comfort, I wouldn't want to come off a motorcycle wearing the Dry Sneaker at high speeds.

Overall, this is a stylish and comfortable boot that offers the safety features I would expect to see in a trainer style boot, but if you want the security of having more protection, I'd look elsewhere. **JO**

IN A LINE: A lightweight and stylish motorcycle trainer for urban riding.

TCX HERO GTX

£229.99

WWW.NEVIS.UK.COM

Based in the small town of Montebelluna, Italy, TCX has been specialising in the design and manufacture of motorcycle boots since 1999. In fact, it does very little else. Unlike many other clothing manufacturers, TCX focuses almost entirely on boots and that dedication has helped the Italian firm gain a reputation for making high quality motorcycle footwear among riders throughout the world.

TCX boots may be made in the company's own factory in Romania these days, but there's still plenty of Italian style on show throughout the range, including in the mid-height Hero Gore-Tex boot I've been wearing for this group test. It looks like a classic lace-up work boot with a touch of vintage styling. Apart from the subtly placed gear shifter pad and ankle inserts, the boots resemble a piece of fashion footwear you'd find on any high street. Pair them with riding jeans and no would know you're in motorcycle gear.

However, the real joy of the TCX Hero Gore-Tex is reserved for when you slip them on. They are incredibly comfortable thanks to a supple full-grain leather construction, a cosy inner lining, and a rubber sole that is flexible enough to ensure they feel like a pair of 'regular' boots when



ABR RATING
9/10

STYLE	9
COMFORT	10
PROTECTION	9
VALUE FOR MONEY	8

walking. An aggressive tread also provides plenty of grip. However, despite a breathable Gore-Tex lining, the TCX Hero soon heat up on foot.

The fastening system combines laces with a zipper. I simply set the laces to my preferred tension and didn't touch them again, instead using the zipper to slip in and out of the boots. That breathable Gore-Tex lining I mentioned earlier also means the TCX Hero is waterproof, and it passed our submergence test without a hitch. When it comes to protection, the boot

features reinforced heel and toe cups, as well as protectors at both ankles. The sole walks the line between being flexible enough for comfort but stiff enough to ensure it withstands a good amount of twisting and bending.

Overall, the TCX Hero Gore-Tex is a high-quality boot that looks and feels good, while offering a decent amount of protection. **JO**

IN A LINE: Style and comfort combine to make an excellent casual riding boot.



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REV'IT! PIONEER H20

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ABR RATING

9/10

STYLE	8
COMFORT	8
PROTECTION	10
VALUE FOR MONEY	8

Dutch company REV'IT! has been designing and manufacturing high-quality, stylish motorcycle clothing for the past 25 years and that trend continues with the Pioneer H20, even if it is the odd one out in this group test.

Unlike the rest of the boots we've reviewed, REV'IT!'s offering is styled and built as a mid-height adventure boot rather than a piece of casual riding footwear, but don't discount it just yet because, as a casual boot, it's got a lot going for it. It also stands out as the only footwear on test with a BOA closure system, rather than laces or Velcro. But let's start with style.

While the café racer crowd won't be enamoured with the Pioneer H20's rugged looks, I rather like the adventure styling with its blend of grey full-grain cowhide and black rubber. Tucked under my riding jeans, they look less obtrusive than a fair number of trainers I've worn in years gone by and they didn't look too out of place during casual use around town, including trips to cafes and pubs. However, if you're looking for a boot to wear in more formal settings, say in an office, you'd be better looking at something like the Oxford Digby.

In terms of comfort and ease of use, the Pioneer H20 excels. In fact, I've been so enamoured that they've become my first choice

of riding footwear for months now. Call me lazy, but I love the fact I don't need to bend over or sit down to put them on. Instead, I simply slip my feet inside while I'm stood up, like a pair of slip-on shoes, and give the BOA dial a twist to tighten the stainless-steel laces. They are basically faff free!

Once on, the Pioneer H20 is stiffer than your average casual riding boot, such as the excellent TCX Hero Gore-Tex, but it is still flexible enough to make walking around town a comfortable experience. And, that added stiffness does provide extra support, particularly around the ankles, which aids with comfort on the bike.

REV'IT! says the rubber Vibram Apex sole, which offers plenty of grip on the pegs and pavement, was designed to provide the comfort of a trekking boot in a piece of motorcycle footwear. This sums up the experience of wearing the Pioneer H20 quite well, although the boot does heat up relatively quickly on foot, so I wouldn't be keen to hike up the likes of Kilimanjaro in them, but they'd be great for walking around on tour.

Where the Pioneer H20 also excels compared to other mid-height motorcycle boots is in terms of protection. It features reinforced heel and toe cups, chunky ankle

protectors, and even a SEESOFT protector on the tongue to soak up the impact from flying debris. And, that stiffness I mentioned earlier gave me every reassurance my feet would be protected in a crash. When it comes to weather protection, the Pioneer H20 features REV'IT!'s own Hydratex waterproof membrane which is laminated to the boot and enabled it to pass our submergence test with ease.

On paper, a mid-height adventure boot without shin protection may not make sense, but in reality, it works exceptionally well for everyday use. And, while the Pioneer H20 may be the odd one out in this casual riding boot test, it offers an alternative for those of us who want the convenience and protection it offers and are happy with its adventure styling.

At £299.99, REV'IT!'s offering isn't cheap, but it is an exceptional piece of footwear. If there were enough mid-height adventure boots on the market to do a group test on, I'd be tempted to give the Pioneer H20 10 out of 10. However, in this casual riding boot test, it can't help but lose marks for a lack of casual styling. **JO**

IN A LINE: Top-notch protection, quality, and comfort in an adventure-style boot, but it loses marks for lack of casual styling in this test.

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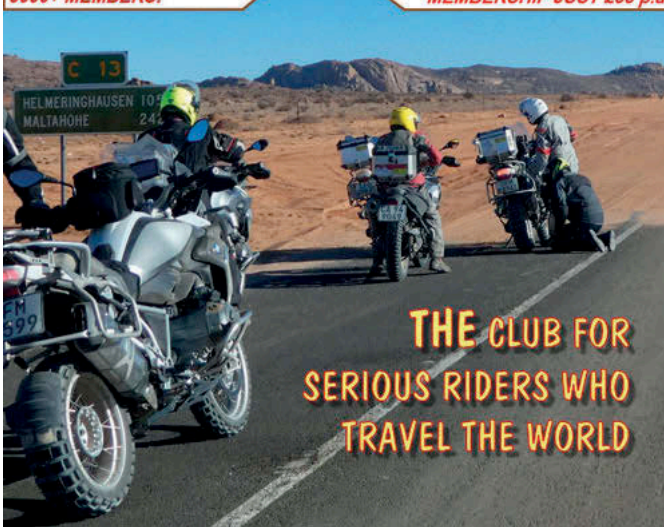
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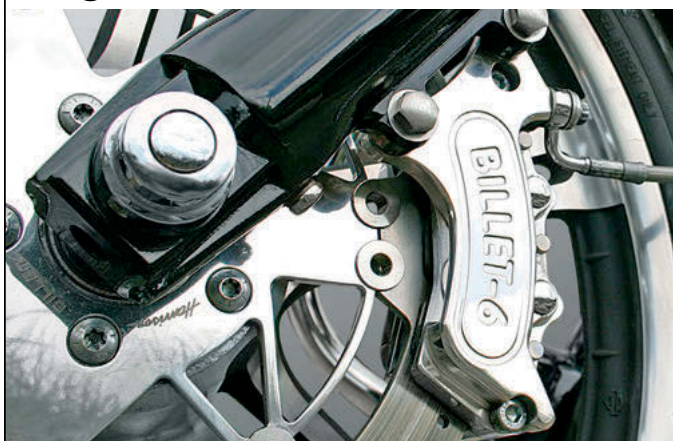


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■ CURRENT BIKE?

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■ DREAM BIKE?

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■ MOST EXPENSIVE MOTORCYCLE ACCESSORY YOU'VE EVER BOUGHT?

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■ MOUNTAIN PASSES OR DESERT PISTES?

That's a hard one as I love a good mountain pass, but I would definitely say desert pistes.

■ TENT OR HOTEL?

Hotel. I've done the tent thing so many times that, now I'm getting that bit older, I just want a good night's sleep.

■ LIFELONG AMBITION?

My dream is to ride around the world on my GS. I'm still a few years away from being able to do this, but I aiming to get this done within the next 10 years.

■ MOST DANGEROUS MOTORCYCLING MOMENT?

Being knocked off my GS by a kangaroo while riding around Australia with my dad last year.

■ MOST MEMORABLE MOTORCYCLING MOMENT?

Earlier this year, myself and some friends rode to the bottom of Portugal and back over a couple of weeks. The moment I arrived in the Picos de Europa mountains, I thought roads don't get better than this.

■ WHAT DO YOU MISS MOST WHEN TRAVELLING?

My kids.

■ IF YOU COULD MEET ANY PERSON, DEAD OR ALIVE, AND ASK THEM ONE QUESTION, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

This would be my grandfather. He died when I was very young and I would like to know more about him.

■ FAVOURITE CRAP JOKE?

What do you call a Frenchman wearing sandals? Phillippe Phillop. **ABR**

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*Receive an enhanced value to your trade-in when you purchase an eligible new BMW Motorrad Model from stock (built before 31 July) between 1 July and 30 September 2020. Receive £1,000 to the value of your trade-in when you purchase a new R 1250 or K 1600 model from stock. Or £500 when purchasing any other new BMW Motorrad model from stock. Offer excludes C Evolution, F 900 R, F 900 XR, S 1000 XR and R 18. Applies to bikes purchased between 01 July and 30 September 2020 and registered and delivered by 30 September 2020. No cash alternative available. Not in conjunction with The Rookie to Rider Offer. Offer subject to availability and withdrawal at any time. Trade-in motorcycle must be in the owner's name for a minimum of 3 months. Trade-in to be valued and offered at retailer's discretion. Trade-in motorcycle needs to at least match the value of the enhancement. Participating retailers only.

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