

A ADVENTURE BIKE RIDER

ISSUE 60: NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2020 £6.99

THE PURSUIT OF FREEDOM



£6.99 ISSUE 60 NOV | DEC 2020



60>

KTM 890 ADVENTURE REVIEWED, UK ROUTES & RIDE TO EVEREST

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950S**
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SPORT BIKE 2020**


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Total Amount of Credit	£10,475.47	Total Amount Payable	£15,930.53
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4 | Ever
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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 31st December 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 12,333 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 12,333 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.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Over the past year we've been running the Adventure Bike Rider Photo of the Year competition. We've had some fantastic entries, so a huge thank you goes out to everyone who submitted pictures from their travels. The intention was to display the winning image at the 2020 ABR Festival, but a pandemic got in the way of that, so we extended the competition and changed the prize a bit.

For this year's Photo of the Year competition, we decided we wanted to run the winning image on the front cover of the November/December issue of the magazine, and that's exactly what we did.

Flip back to the front cover for a second and bask in the glory of this fantastic photograph that was shot by adventure biker Martin Litschauer. It shows his wife, Verena Kaiser-Litschauer, riding on Switzerland's Susten Pass and it was pretty much a unanimous decision in the office to choose this particular shot as our Photo of the Year. It perfectly symbolises the pursuit of freedom and that's exactly what adventure biking is all about in my book.

The photo was taken on a tour the couple rode this year, where they decided to stay closer to home (they're from Austria) due to the coronavirus restrictions of coronavirus. They rode nearly 2,000 miles in three weeks and the Susten Pass is, according to Martin, a road they will always remember. There's no doubt that they're lucky living so close to the Alps (compared to us in the UK), but seeing Martin's photo was a great reminder that, even when restrictions are in place, it's still possible to have an adventure.

Martin and Verena win a digital subscription, an ABR calendar, some ABR stickers, ABR T-Shirts, two tickets to the ABR Festival and the prestige of being crowned winners. I highly recommend you follow them on social media on either Instagram (@worldspinsasfastasweride) or Facebook (/worldspinsasfastasweride), or visit www.worldspinsasfastasweride.com, to enjoy their two-wheeled adventures.

Martin's photo and 11 of our favourite entries into this year's Photo of the Year competition will be immortalised in the 2021 Adventure Bike Rider Calendar, which will be launched at the end of November. Make sure you head to www.adventurebikerider.com/2021calendar where you can enter a pre-launch competition to win yours.

Think you can take a better shot than this? Then why don't you send it to ollie@adventurebikerider.com. With the Photo of the Year 2020 coming to an end, it means that we'll now start taking entries for the Adventure Bike Rider Photo of the Year 2021, where we will display the winning shot at the 2021 ABR Festival.

Anyway, Photo of the Year aside, this issue of ABR has been quite an exciting one as it's the first time in a while that we've been able to go on a new bike launch! While there has been a lot of restrictions on travel, KTM managed to organise a cracking launch in Greece for the new KTM 890 Adventure. You can read all about the bike on page 86 of this issue.

Enjoy the mag
Bryn

B. Davies

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 around-the-world epic, we're just as interested in small road trips to Europe. Email a synopsis and some pics to james@adventurebikerider.com.



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THE PINNACLE OF EXPERIENCE

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Twin**



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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
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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 promoter'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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Fuel your restless spirit with a new adventure every day. Discover KTM's sporty attitude and proven performance credentials aboard this new, compact single-cylinder travel-enduro machine – the KTM 390 ADVENTURE. Versatile ergonomics, smooth power delivery, and innovative technology all come together in a comfortable, lightweight package – created for those who want to fit more adventure into their daily lives.

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Head to www.ktm.com to find an interactive finance calculator to create your own finance example. Choose between a Conditional Sale or PCP agreement, then adjust your deposit, mileage and finance term to build an individual quote to suit your needs.

2020 MODEL PCP FINANCE EXAMPLES

Model	390 ADVENTURE	790 ADVENTURE	790 ADVENTURE R	1290 SUPER ADVENTURE S
Term	36 months	36 months	36 months	36 months
Monthly payment	£79.00	£89.00	£99.00	£119.00
Price	£5,499.00	£9,799.00*	£10,999.00*	£13,199.00*
Deposit	£1,186.50	£2,506.80	£2,835.80	£3,550.50
Amount of credit	£4,312.50	£7,292.20	£8,163.20	£9,648.50
Interest charges	£465.25	£910.86	£1,021.43	£1,201.75
Optional final payment (GFV)	£1,933.75	£4,999.06	£5,620.63	£6,566.25
Total amount payable	£5,964.25	£10,709.86	£12,020.43	£14,400.75
Annual mileage	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Excess mileage charge	14.9p per mile	14.9p per mile	14.9p per mile	14.9p per mile
Representative APR	4.9% APR	4.9% APR	4.9% APR	4.9% APR

* Includes manufacturers discount of £1,500 on 790 Adventure, £1,600 on 790 Adventure R and £2,400 on 1290 Super Adventure S. Finance example updated October 2020. 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



Please make an attempt to imitate the illustrated riding scenes, always wear protective clothing and observe the applicable provisions of the road traffic regulations! The illustrated vehicle may vary in selected details from the production models and some illustrating feature optional equipment available at additional cost.

Photo: R. Schedl

www.kiska.com



ADVENTURE A BIKE RIDER FESTIVAL 2022

25-27 JUNE RAGLEY HALL, WARWICKSHIRE

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- Ride the 20km AX41 Adventure Trail
- Test ride the latest adventure and touring bikes
- Chill out (or rock out) with live music, a full bar, and delicious street food
- Meet your adventure biking heroes
- Learn to ride off road
- Take part in road and green lane ride outs
- Premium facilities at a five-star location, including warm showers and posh loos
- Luxury glamping available

www.adventurebikerider.com/festival2021



REASON TO RIDE



THE ROAD TO EVEREST, TIBET

When asked why he made repeated attempts to become the first person to summit Mount Everest, despite failing on a number of occasions, British mountaineer George Mallory simply replied: "Because it's there."

Sadly, he perished on the mountain, but the world's highest peak continues to attract people with a thirst for adventure to this day, including motorcyclists.

Riding to Everest Base Camp has become one of the world's ultimate adventure biking experiences and, since 2015, it has become a little easier thanks to the paving of the Zhufeng Road, also now as the Everest Road.

This stunning stretch of asphalt will take you right up to Everest's North Base Camp in Tibet amid some of the tightest switchbacks and most awe-inspiring scenery you can imagine. But the views aren't the only thing to leave intrepid travellers breathless, as the road tops out at a lung-busting 5,200m.

You can discover how to ride to Everest Base Camp yourself on page 62 of this issue of *ABR*.



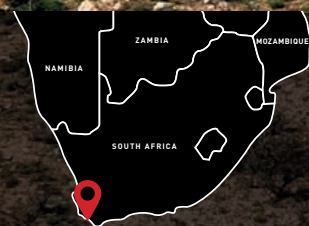
CLARENCE DRIVE, SOUTH AFRICA

South of Cape Town overlooking the Atlantic Ocean is Chapman's Peak Drive, a popular road among local bikers and visitors to South Africa alike, but a few miles away on the east coast of False Bay is Clarence Drive, which offers even better riding

C

larence Drive is one of the most scenic routes on the Cape Peninsula. Clinging to cliff faces on the edge of False Bay, it runs from the windswept town of Rooi-Els to Gordon's Bay, and it is more protected from the elements than its more famous sister route, Chapman's Peak Drive. Over 13 miles it packs in 77 bends, including a few hairpins, but mostly it's glorious curves and sweeping turns.

Ride it once for the ride and once again for the views along a silky-smooth surface of well-maintained tarmac. Being located relatively close to Cape Town, Clarence Drive can get busy at times, so make sure you get an early start or bite the bullet and slow your pace to share what is a glorious road. With daytime temperatures in winter only dropping to their low teens, Clarence Drive is a road you can enjoy riding year-round. **ABR**



CLARENCE DRIVE

WANT TO RIDE THIS?

Both Clarence Drive and Chapman's Peak Drive are among the sensational roads you can ride with Motorrad Tours. The independent tour operator specialises in taking the hassle out of the planning and logistics of riding the world's greatest motorcycle routes, without taking away your freedom to ride and explore. You can experience both of these iconic roads for yourself on Motorrad Tour's Garden Route: South Africa 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...

IF DISNEY DID SCOTLAND



The July/August issue of *ABR* had a great article on the west of Scotland and the magazine arrived as we were planning our own four-day trip to loop the west part of the North Coast 500, just north of the *ABR* route, visiting the Falls of Shin, Smoo Cave, Kylesku, and Ullapool.

My wife and I have done a fair bit of two up touring in Europe but this was our first trip beyond the Great Glen, and our first journey on my new BMW R GS 1250 Exclusive.

Scotland was amazing and so beautiful, especially the roads from Durness to Ullapool. If Disney opened a Brigadoon theme park and employed the best Japanese imperial gardener, they might get close to the beauty we saw. It was bright and sunny mostly (Storm Francis just skimmed past us) although you may need a bit of luck with the weather.

The roads are often not more than one car width of tarmac with lots of passing places and sequential blind turns. Occasionally there may be lines on the road but mainly its driveway standard, free of gravel, and no significant potholes. I was in third and fourth gear most of the time.

I needed to be ready to break on bends because there is more traffic now than these roads were ever meant to take. The NC500 has been a huge success, but this also means roads that may have seen a tractor a day now carry a vehicle every few minutes in some places, and kids, sheep, and chickens are taking time to adapt.

One last thing, which the Scots will know, if it rained the day before, the air temperature is comfortable, and the wind has dropped, then it can be hellish unless you have a midgey net!

DUNCAN AND CARON CAMPBELL

10 YEARS OF ADVENTURE

It's hard to believe that it's been 10 years since the first issue of *ABR* hit the shelves, and I was gladdened greatly to see the mighty Triumph Tiger 885 making it into the Top 10 bikes of the decade feature in the anniversary issue.

My ownership of the Tiger coincided with the release of issue one and it was clear to see Alun's (*ABR*'s Founder and Publisher)



enthusiasm for Hinckley's finest from the get-go. I got the chance to chat all things 'Steamer' with him at the first Highland Boil Rally in Ullapool over a few cans.

Despite the fact that I've added a BMW R 1150 RT to the stable since, the Tiger remains my go to bike for one-up trips and this picture was taken in September on the road to Ardnamurchan on the west coast of Scotland.

Thanks, as ever for the great

work you do with the magazine and here's to another 10 years of adventure bike travel.

CHRIS MCTEIR

A BIKER'S BEST FRIEND



I recently returned from a fantastic trip through Spain with my friend and best mate Buddy the sprocker spaniel. I took the ferry from Portsmouth to Santander, through the Picos de Europa to Portugal, then across to Spain taking in the Costa del Sol,

and back up north to Ruidera then Jaca. After that I rode through France to the Eurotunnel and back home to Saddleworth.

The roads, campsites, and hotels were all very quiet. Many times we were the only two campers on the site. The roads were absolutely fantastic whether you like straight highways, sweeping bends, or mountain passes. I also thoroughly recommend travelling with your best mate, your dog!

CHRIS BANNATYNE

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.

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Fully loaded offer available, when purchasing and registering any new Tiger 1200 or 800 model between October 1st and December 31st 2020. Consult your dealer for details. Subject to availability, subject to change. Fitting charges may apply. Triumph UK reserve the right to change offers at any time without notice and are subject to availability. Accessories are subject to availability and may be subject to substitution or change.



FOR THE RIDE



CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

Fed up with unwrapping pants and socks every December 25? Then slip this gift guide to your loved ones to ensure you have a very merry Christmas

Words: James Oxley and Ollie Rooke







ADVENTURE BIKE RIDER FESTIVAL 2021 TICKETS (25-27 JUNE)

From £55

www.adventurebikerider.com/festival2021



The greatest celebration of adventure biking ever held in the UK will take place next year and you're invited. The 2021 Adventure Bike Rider Festival will be an unforgettable weekend of non-stop action and entertainment, on and off the bike, so make sure you ask Santa for your tickets this Christmas.

The jewel in the crown will be the 20km-long, AX41 Adventure Trail that'll weave its way through the magnificent grounds of the Ragley Hall Estate in Warwickshire. The route will be big bike friendly with enough beginner, intermediate, and advanced sections to keep you happy no matter your riding ability.

Elsewhere, you can test ride the latest adventure and touring bikes, meet heroes of the adventure biking world like Elspeth Beard and Austin Vince, take part in road ride outs, receive world-class off-road tuition, explore the Adventure Village, and chill out (or rock out) with live music, a full bar, and delicious street food.

And, because our days of roughing it are over, the five-star festival location will be reflected in the first-class services on site, including plenty of hot showers, fully serviced posh toilets, and the chance to enjoy the luxury of glamping.

So, if you want to spend a glorious weekend in June riding on or off road, getting advice for your next bike trip, improving your riding skills, testing out the latest motorcycles, and sharing a beer with like-minded riders in magnificent surroundings, I'd recommend you start writing your Christmas list pronto, especially as a limited number of discount festival tickets are still available. **JO**

ADVENTURE BIKE RIDER T-SHIRTS

From £19.99

www.adventurebikerider.com/merchandise



A gang, a brotherhood, a community: Call it what you will. When you swing your leg over your motorcycle, you become part of something bigger, something special. But that feeling doesn't need to end when you switch off your engine thanks to the new range of ABR T-shirts.

They're for people like you, adventure bikers who want to wear their love of exploring the world by motorcycle on their chest. They're a companion and a constant reminder that the pursuit of freedom is only a turn of the ignition key away.

So, instead of unwrapping the same old boring T-shirts from M&S this Christmas morning, make sure your loved ones know you want an Adventure Bike Rider T-shirt instead. There are limited edition and classic ranges to choose from in a selection of sizes up to XXXL.

Whether you want to show the world your love of mountain passes with the *Mountain Trails* T-shirt, or you'd like to celebrate the joy of riding in the UK with the *Rock, Paper, Bike GB* design, there's an ABR T-shirt to suit every riding style.

So, be part of something bigger. Nail your colours to the mast. Live adventure this Christmas. Just make sure you don't spill gravy down your new ABR tee while you're eating your turkey dinner. **JO**

ADVENTURE BIKE RIDER DIGITAL LIBRARY ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

£32.99

www.adventurebikerider.com/shop



If you fancy getting 10 years' worth of adventure biking inspiration, information, and entertainment this Christmas morning, then I've got the perfect gift for you.

With an Adventure Bike Rider Digital Library membership you'll get access to every issue of *ABR* ever published. That's 60 issues of the magazine available to read on your phone, tablet, or computer immediately. If you ask me, immersing myself in a world of adventure biking is a much better way to spend Christmas than watching repeats on the telly.

Better yet, throughout the next year you'll be the first to receive each new issue of *ABR* the moment it's published, so there's no more waiting around for the postman to get your adventure biking fix. Once you've downloaded the new issue onto your device, you can read it at your leisure anywhere in world, even without an internet connection.

Once you're a digital library member, you gain access to a wealth of motorcycling knowledge. This includes reviews of every new adventure and touring bike from the past 10 years, a detailed library of hundreds of green lanes across the UK, masterclasses to help improve your riding skills, in-depth gear reviews, and of course, inspirational travel features from across the globe.

So, after a tumultuous year, there's no better way to make up for lost time in 2021 than by becoming a member of the *ABR* Digital Library. It's time to start dropping some hints about what you'd like for Christmas. **JO**

PANNIER PROTECTORS

£28.95-£68.95

www.pannierprotectors.co.uk



If, like me, you use your panniers as a make-shift sideboard while on tour, you've probably had a mishap or two. A combination of slippery aluminium and my motorcycle's lean angle on its side stand don't offer much resistance to gravity, and it's a habit that has claimed a few victims, including a lovely French baguette, countless cups of coffee, and most frustratingly of all, a rather expensive helmet.

There are two things to take away from this. The first is that I should really learn from my mistakes. The second is that it's about time I cover the tops of my panniers with a grippy surface. This would have the added benefit of protecting them from those little scratches and marks that can make an expensive piece of kit look shabby. That's where the Rubber PrecisionTech pannier protectors come in.

Made from UV protected, heavy-duty synthetic rubber, they are designed to withstand the rigours of a life spent touring in a range of conditions, having been tested from -45°C to a searing 110°C. Alongside this, the dimpled top offers plenty of grip for whatever you use your panniers for. They are also cut to fit the various sizes of luggage offered by motorcycle manufacturers and aftermarket suppliers, ensuring a perfect fit every time.

So, whether you're strapping a tent or an extra roll bag on top of your panniers, or even using your luggage to make yourself a ham sandwich in a layby, you'll be safe in the knowledge that your valuables won't end up on the floor and your panniers will be free of unsightly marks. **OR**





SENA 50 SERIES INTERCOMS

£309

www.sena.com



Whether I'm chatting to a mate on tour or listening to music on a long motorway slog, a motorcycle intercom always makes a day in the saddle more enjoyable. However, the first headsets I used were a far cry from the technology on offer today, as demonstrated by Sena's new 50 Series units, the 50R and 50S.

Both feature improved Mesh 2.0 technology, which supports a mammoth five-mile range and three different intercom modes. Group mesh allows for a private channel which can host up to 23 other users, multi-channel open mesh allows for a CB radio-style open network, and there's also a traditional Bluetooth mode.

Alongside these tweaks there are plenty of other improvements. I'm particularly fond of the re-designed speakers which are now smaller and more comfortable than previous models, while offering fantastic sound quality. There's also the addition of support for multi-language voice commands and the Google and Siri digital assistants, providing a hands-free experience to enable you to change channel, adjust the volume, or answer a phone call without taking your hands from the handlebars.

The physically larger 50S unit offers a maximum chat time of 14 hours (Bluetooth chat), which drops to 13 hours on the more compact 50R. Sena has also introduced fast charging, meaning a 20-minute blast will add six hours of Bluetooth chat, perfect for a quick boost while on tour. This is a great piece of kit that has pushed the motorcycle comms bar that bit higher. **OR**

BRUHL MD1900+ BIKE DRYER

£139.00

www.bruhl.co.uk



How much is your time worth? It's a question I would pose potential customers in my previous life working in IT sales. We'd discover where and how much time was being wasted, then multiply the result by the cost of their time. If our solution was cheaper than the cost of the time wasted, I'd have a sale. Simple, and applicable to the real world.

Let me give you an example. After returning home from a typical Sunday morning ride, I'll always give my bike a wash to remove any corrosive muck that I've picked up. I'll then leave it to dry in the sun outside of my house, before spending the next hour anxiously peeping out of the window to check if it's dry yet and still there. Oh, and feel free to add in another hour if you own a bike decked out in chrome that needs further attention.

Clearly, my wasted time is found in the drying phase, and the solution comes in the form of the Bruhl MD1900+ Bike Dryer. It features a single turbine, heating elements, and an air filter which directs a hot, debris-free blast of air onto my bike. Unlike a towel, the Bruhl dries every nook and cranny in no time at all. The result is a bone-dry bike with no water spotting or corrosion, keeping it in tip-top condition for longer. It also gives me a free hour or two to kick back and relax after a ride and it's hard to put a price on that. **OR**

V-STROM 1050XT

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£139 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
£11,747.00	£2,151.82	£9,595.18	£139.00	£5,977.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE	AGREEMENT DURATION	PURCHASE FEE*	INTEREST RATE (FIXED)	REPRESENTATIVE APR
£13,132.82	37 MONTHS	£10.00	5.71%	5.9% APR

*Included in Optional Final Repayment

Credit is subject to status and is only available to UK residents aged 18 and over. Suzuki Personal Contract Purchase (PCP) is only available through Suzuki Finance, a trading style of Suzuki Financial Services Limited, St. William House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff, CF10 5BH. This Representative Example is based on an annual mileage of 4,000. Finance figures are correct at time of print – October 2020, but may be subject to change. With Personal Contract Purchase (PCP) you have the option after you have paid all of the regular monthly repayments to: (1) Return the vehicle and not pay the Optional Final Repayment. In this example if the vehicle has exceeded 12,333 miles, a charge of 7.2p (including VAT at 20%) will apply per excess mile. If the vehicle is in good condition (fair wear and tear accepted) and has not exceeded 12,333 miles you will have nothing further to pay. (2) Pay the Optional Final Repayment to own the vehicle or (3) Part exchange the vehicle subject to settlement of your existing finance agreement; new finance agreements are subject to status.



KEIS G701 HEATED GLOVES

£199.99

www.keisapparel.com



Since discovering the joy of heated gloves, my winter rides have been transformed. No longer do I make a beeline for the kettle as soon as I arrive at the office, desperate to thaw out my frozen digits around a piping-hot mug of tea. That's why I was so interested to see the manufacturer of my current pair, British brand Keis, release its new G701 heated gloves.

The new model features a semi-bonded construction which, through some clever trickery in the manufacturing process, bonds the different layers of the gloves together. This reduces slippage between the outer textile material and the inner layers, resulting in a winter glove with a lot less bulk than you'd usually expect but which still keeps your hands warm and dry.

On top of that, the G701 comes with a new grippy surface on the palms and fingers to ensure your grip on the handlebars doesn't slip. To protect your hands in a slide there's a palm slider, knuckle protection, and a robust ballistic spandex outer shell.

The heat controllers are located on the back of the gloves and are reachable when they are tucked under the sleeve of a jacket, while the heating elements can be powered by battery packs or wired in directly to a bike's battery. A small visor wipe and touchscreen-capable thumbs and index fingers are also nice touches to cap off a glove that has a distinctly premium feel to it. **OR**

HONDA ADVENTURE CENTRE COURSES

£299-£499 for courses

www.davethorpehonda.com



Riding an adventure bike off road is arguably the most fun you can have on two wheels, but taking your first steps into green-laning can be a daunting prospect. This is where the Honda Adventure Centre comes in.

Located in the stunning surroundings of Exmoor National Park, the centre stretches across a vast area encompassing every type of riding terrain imaginable. It's range of one and two-day courses cater for all riding abilities, from complete beginners to regular trail riders who want to improve their skills, all under the watchful eye of former Motocross World Champion Dave Thorpe and his team of experienced instructors.

I spent a cracking day at the Honda Adventure Centre this year on one of its brand-new Africa Twins. I made my way up tricky hill climbs, slid down boggy descents, splashed through deep water-crossings, and even learned how to power slide on loose gravel. The day was a chance to improve my skills and also have a huge amount of fun. It's certainly an experience I'd recommend everyone try at least once, even if you don't have an adventure bike in your garage right now, although you may just find that changing when you return home.

If enduro riding is more your thing, Dave Thorpe also runs the Honda Off-Road Centre. A ticket to an enduro day would certainly make me a very happy boy come Christmas morning. I'll just have to make sure this gift guide ends up in the right hands. **OR**



CARDO FREECOM 1+ AND FREECOM 4+

£129.98 / £234.98

www.cardosystems.com



Good intercoms don't have to break the bank. While I'm a fan of the added features and cutting-edge technology that make up the spec sheets of top-of-the-range units, there are plenty of riders looking for the convenience of an entry-level intercom unit. Those that simply allow you to chat with a pillion or a small group of riders, or even just listen to music or GPS directions on a Sunday ride.

Fitting that bill perfectly are Cardo's Freecom 1+ and Freecom 4+. Best known for its premium intercoms, Cardo has produced two entry-level Bluetooth units without sacrificing the premium quality I've grown to expect from the brand. For solo riders, or those who only want to communicate with a pillion, the Freecom 1+ is the unit of choice, while the Freecom 4+ caters for those who want to communicate with up to three other riders while they're in the saddle.

Both offer 13 hours of talk time, a slim and lightweight unit, and full waterproofing. The units differ in Bluetooth range, with the Freecom 4+ offering a range of 0.8 miles compared to the shorter rider to pillion range of the Freecom 1+.

The Freecom 1+ comes with a set of Cardo's own speakers, but the Freecom 4+ benefits from a partnership with speaker brand JBL for enhanced sound quality. Both also feature automatic volume adjustment, which alters sound levels based on ambient noise, as well as voice commands, and universal Bluetooth connectivity to other units. Sometimes, less really is more. **OR**

SOLAR AND OVERLAND POWER BANK BUNDLE

£124.95

www.mobilesolarchargers.co.uk



I can think of few better feelings than the excitement of setting off on a motorcycle tour. The prospect of loading up my bike with camping equipment and exploring the unknown, with all the self-sufficiency that motorcycling brings, is unbeatable. However, going off grid can create problems when my phone, camera, action cam, and intercom all compete for the attention of the single USB charging port on my Honda Africa Twin.

If you find yourself having the same issues on tour, then put this Power Bank Bundle on your Christmas list. It includes a Solar Panel charger, an Overland Power Bank, a Powerstick, and a USB LED torch. The Solar Panel clips to the lid of your top box using carabiners (included) where it converts the sun's rays into electricity to charge up the water-resistant Power Bank. This can then be used to charge all your electronic devices on the road.

The Power Bank also doubles as a jump starter for your motorcycle and an emergency torch. Alongside this, the small Powerstick, which comfortably fits in my pocket, provides a little more juice should my electrical devices require it in the evening, and it can also power the small USB torch included.

Packing down into a small package, which takes up very little room in a pannier, this is a touring-friendly bundle that will help you enjoy your two-wheeled camping adventures with fully charged devices. **OR**



MUC-OFF PRESSURE WASHER MOTORCYCLE BUNDLE

£139.99

www.muc-off.com



You may have heard the horror stories of how petrol station jet washers can damage bearings and other motorcycle parts, but it can be hard to look past the convenience and ease of use they offer. A quick blast with a pressure washer is certainly less time consuming than spending my weekends scrubbing away at dirt and grime with a bucket and sponge. However, for the past year I haven't had to compromise because I've been using Muc-Off's pressure washer, built with bikes in mind.

The pressure washer features three different nozzles, one for bicycles, one for motorcycles (which is safe to use on bearings and suspension parts), and an adjustable pressure lance that can deliver a bit more oomph to get rid of hard-to-budge dirt on my tyres. All I have to do is hook the washer up to mains power and the garden hose and I'm free to start spraying.

A snow foam lance is also included which coats my bike in a thick layer of soapy foam to ensure a deep clean. I'll then hose it down with the pressure washer before using the motorcycle protectant and microfibre polishing cloth to dry my bike off and add a bit of resistance to road crud. Offering the convenience of a petrol station washer on your driveway without risking damage to your pride and joy, this could be one of the most useful Christmas presents you find under the tree this year. **OR**

POWERBRONZE POWERBLADE

£195

www.powerbronze.co.uk



A good windscreen can be the difference between an enjoyable cruise or arriving at your destination with neck ache and the sudden desire to take the train home. Sadly, it often seems that manufacturers see them as an afterthought, and many riders find themselves turning to the aftermarket to solve their buffeting issues. If all this sounds familiar, then the Powerblade screen from Powerbronze may well be the solution to your windswept woes.

The Powerblade is fully adjustable with two ranges of movement which means I can move it up and down, as well as tilting it forward and back in my search for the perfect position. So, after a day hitting the trails with the screen out of the way on its lowest setting, I can then raise it to full height for a sheltered motorway ride home. Meanwhile, the angle adjustment helps me avoid the dreaded turbulence that some other screens can create as they hit the air with the aerodynamic efficiency of a barn door.

Powerblade screens come either clear or with a light tint, while Powerbronze offers bike specific mounting kits for a number of popular adventure bike models. If long-distance touring comfort is a present you'd like to receive this Christmas, it may be worth showing your loved ones this gift guide over the next few weeks. **OR**

FORCEFIELD PRO SHIRT XV 2 AIR

£224.99

www.forcefieldbodyarmour.com



Fans of greenlaning and off-road riding may already be familiar with armoured under layers. There are few bits of kit better suited to keeping you safe and cool while working up a sweat on the trails. The Forcefield Pro Shirt XV 2 Air does both by providing high levels of impact protection in a cool, lightweight package. However, even if riding off road isn't your thing, don't discount an armoured under layer just yet.

When the mercury soars to levels that induce mild hysteria in the UK, riding a motorcycle can become a sweaty affair. While vents in your standard textile adventure suit can help channel cooling air around your body, they're not particularly effective when you're waiting at traffic lights or filtering through grid-locked A roads, where I often find myself overheating quickly. That's where an armoured underlayer like the Forcefield Pro Shirt XV 2 Air can help.

It combines CE level 2 elbow, shoulder, back, and chest armour with a fabric that's soft against my skin. It's also breathable and helps wick sweat and moisture away from my body. Throw a thin, abrasion-resistant jacket over the top and you've got a cool riding set up for warm days that will keep you protected on and off road.

Of course, it can also be used throughout the year as part of a layering system when temperatures drop. The body-hugging design helps keep the armour in place, ensuring it won't slip out during a spill when I'm wearing a mid-layer, jumper, and winter riding jacket over the top. **OR**

RST RUCKSACK

£39.99

www.rst-moto.com



While hard luggage is my go-to choice for touring, there's no doubt a set of panniers and a top box adds weight and width to my ride. It's a compromise I'm happy to make while cruising down a French toll road, but it can be a little impractical when it comes to commuting or filtering through dense city traffic. It's in these situations I've been turning to the RST Rucksack.

As a popular British motorcycle brand, RST knows a thing or two about producing kit for riders, and this wealth of knowledge is evident in a rucksack which is comfortable to wear and packed full of nice little touches with bikers in mind.

Space is often an issue when it comes to soft luggage, which is why it's so impressive that the Rucksack boasts a whopping 42.5l capacity. That's at least equal to, if not larger than, most panniers and top boxes I've come across. Alongside a vast storage space, there's also a padded laptop pouch, an easily accessible top pocket that is perfect for storing my wallet and keys, and a couple of outer stash pockets for more bits and bobs.

If that sounds like too much space to fill, there are two compression straps that help reduce the bulk and ensure the fabric doesn't flap about in the wind. There are also chest and waist straps to keep the rucksack tight and secure as I ride along, while a padded back area provides comfort during longer stretches while wearing it. Considering the competitive price, it's a handy piece of luggage to have around. **OR**



MOSKO MOTO NOMAX TANK BAG

£162.34

www.moskomoto.eu



How do you keep hydrated while touring on your motorcycle? To be honest, it was never something I thought about too often until one day when a combination of hot temperatures, heavy bike clothing, and a few beers the previous evening resulted in the onset of the early stages of heatstroke. By lunch time, I had my head under a tap in a service station bathroom desperately trying to rehydrate.

Thankfully, Mosko Moto is on the case to help you avoid a similar situation. Taking inspiration from hydration packs used by skiers and mountain bikers, the company has created motorcycling's equivalent in the Nomax tank bag. The most impressive feature is the large 2l hydration reservoir and drinking tube that you can use on the go, as well as multiple layered storage areas with handy stash spots for documents, a phone, a wallet, and just about anything else you need to hand on tour. On top of all of that, the Nomax quickly unclips from the bike and can be worn as a backpack off the bike. So, when it comes to lunch stops, you can keep your essentials with you without filling your pockets or carrying around a bulky tank bag in one hand.

The Nomax is constructed from the same rugged ballistic nylon that makes up Mosko Moto's hard-wearing soft panniers. There is also a waterproof rain cover, a quick-release mounting system, and webbing up top to help you stash the map pouch included with the tank bag, or your own accessories. **OR**

COOL COVERS SEAT COVER

£45-75 depending on seat and model of bike

www.coolcovers.co.uk



It's not hard to spot a biker who has spent the day on an uncomfortable seat. They waddle around bike cafés and hotel lobbies like John Wayne wearing a pained expression across their faces. I admit, I've been that guy.

For those of you looking to alleviate a case of saddle sore there are a few options from the aftermarket such as premium comfort seats, gel inserts, or even blow-up pads. However, these can prove expensive and sometimes ineffectual. This is where a Cool Cover comes in.

It's a mesh cover that slips over your motorcycle seat and allows airflow to keep your backside cool when the temperature rises. But a Cool Cover doesn't just provide air conditioning for your arse. It also gives a massaging effect, working on the same principle behind the beaded seat covers you find in cars, helping to reduce fatigue over long distances which makes life a lot more comfortable for your backside.

A Cool Cover also helps keep your bum dry. During a deluge, it allows water to drain away instead of pooling on the surface of your bike seat.

Cool Covers has a wide variety of seat covers to fit the stock perches on most adventure bikes, while the team also offers a custom fitting experience in-house for those with less common seats. Alongside this, the company also offers gift vouchers, which are perfect stocking fillers for those looking to treat their riding mates to comfy, cool, and dry bums in the saddle this festive season. **OR**



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Realise the full potential of the **Ninja H2 SX** range with complimentary panniers and interior bags available until **30th November 2020**. Take your adventure further with more luggage and revel in the exhilarating rush from the **Kawasaki supercharged engine**. Surge across continents, along autobahns and through mountain passes. Go further faster on our **most capable Sports Tourer** yet.



Ninja
H2 SX



To find out more visit the website or contact your local Kawasaki dealer.

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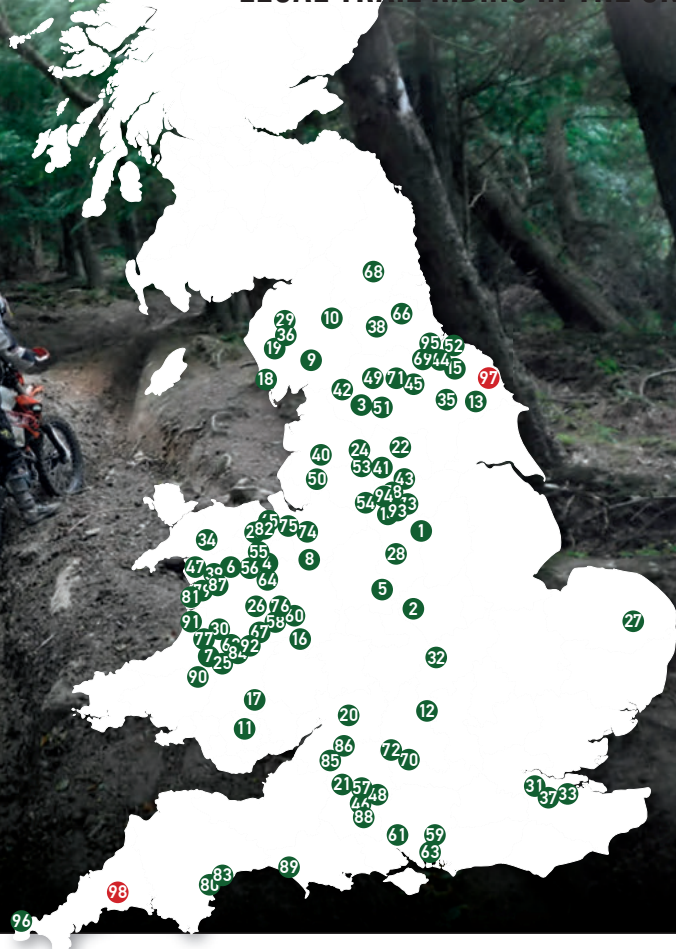
Kawasaki

UK

GREEN LANES

LEGAL TRAIL RIDING IN THE UK

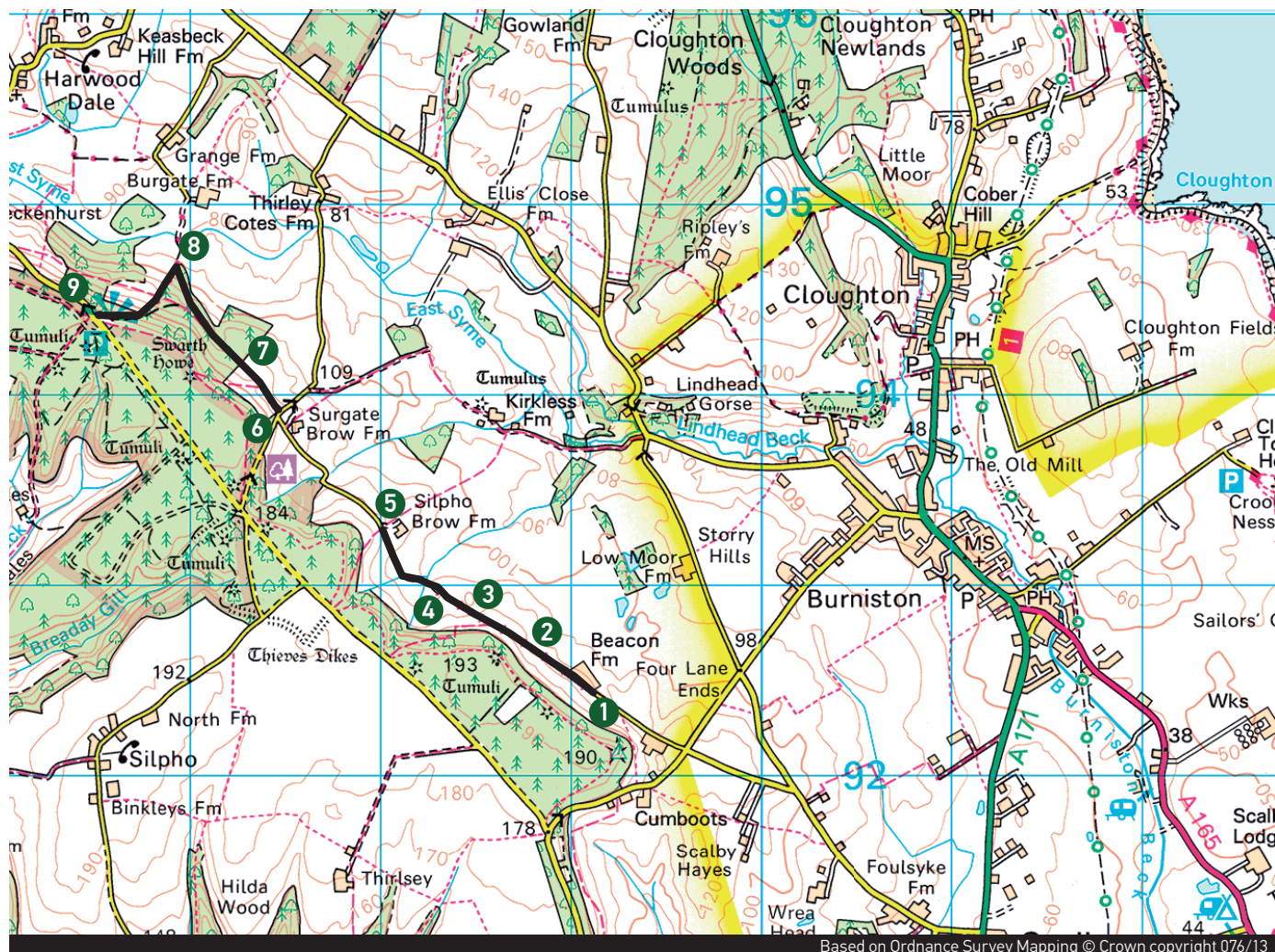
THIS ISSUE: BEACON BROW ROAD IN NORTH YORKSHIRE, AND TREVILLIS WOOD IN CORNWALL

Words and photos: **Mike Beddows**

Marker positions are approximate.

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	Thurriash 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)	97	60	Beacon Brow Road (North Yorkshire)
			65	44	Clwydian Hills (North Wales)	98	60	Trevillis Wood (Cornwall) ➤



Based on Ordnance Survey Mapping © Crown copyright 076/13

97 BEACON BROW ROAD, NORTH YORKSHIRE

T

hese lanes are just north of Scarborough near the North Yorkshire coast and I've split them into two parts. The first is fantastic and can be attempted by riders

of all abilities. However, the second lane should only be ridden by experienced riders on smaller enduro bikes. It's a grade five in terms of difficulty, only the third green lane I've awarded such a high difficulty rating to.

Be aware that, although there were no signs stating this second lane is not legal to ride, I did get stopped by local people in a car who told me I shouldn't be on the track as it's private. However, the North Yorkshire local government website lists it as a track and certainly doesn't point towards there being any restrictions placed upon it.

And, put it this way, the presence of plenty of deep ruts points towards the lane taking a hammering from the 4x4 brigade, so I don't believe the person who stopped me. It certainly wouldn't stop me riding what is a great little lane.



THE FACTS

DISTANCE:
2.5 miles

NEAREST TOWN:
Scarborough

MAPS:
OS Explorer 301 Scarborough

START/END

GRID REFERENCE:
SE993922 / SE964944

DIFFICULTY RATING:
2-5

WOW FACTOR:
3

OTHER TRAILS:

I linked together a good mixture of trails to the west of Scarborough. The total distance was about 70 miles and took in legal trails in Dalby Forest, Wykeham Forest, and Broxa Forest. Bar the grade five documented here, the rest were straightforward.

THE ROUTE

1-2

Pass a farm on the right where the tarmac ends and the hard-compacted track begins. It's dead straight as the track heads into the distance. There were farmer's fields full of livestock on both sides when I rode this route.

2-3

Once you crest the hill, there are fantastic views to the right of the rolling Yorkshire countryside with the North Sea as a backdrop. The track changes ever so slightly here, but it's still easy riding on a hard-compact base with some grass growing in the middle.

3-4

Head downhill. The track is still dead straight and there are a few loose stones around, but it's an easy ride all the way to the end. A slight right-hand bend

takes you into a farmer's field with no hedge or fence on the left, the track has more grass growing in the middle so stick to one of the 4x4 vehicle tracks.

4-5

Round a slight left-hand bend and travel through the middle of a field. This is a little tricky as you are mainly riding on grass so take care in the wet. Follow the obvious track all the way uphill to the farm, and then through a gate, where you'll complete the lane.

5-6

A tarmac section.

6-7

Only proceed if you are an experienced rider with the right type of bike. Head through the gate and follow a track which isn't obvious to begin with as it's

just a farmer's field. However, the track soon becomes visible and it is easy riding to start with.

7-8

Head through the gate and the track gets muddier and slightly overgrown. Head downhill until you come to a sharp left turn.

8-9

You can see from the start that this isn't going to be easy. The ruts are deep and there are awkward hanging trees and plenty of roots. It would be pointless trying to ride in the ruts as they are so deep. The centre of the ruts is also very difficult. It's at a very steep angle, and once you are on it, you cannot dab as the ruts on either side are so deep. I wouldn't advise trying this solo. Trust me when I say this is a challenging lane. ➤

DO YOU EVER
FEEL STUCK IN A RUT?



A GOOD STRETCH
TO GET SOME SPEED UP

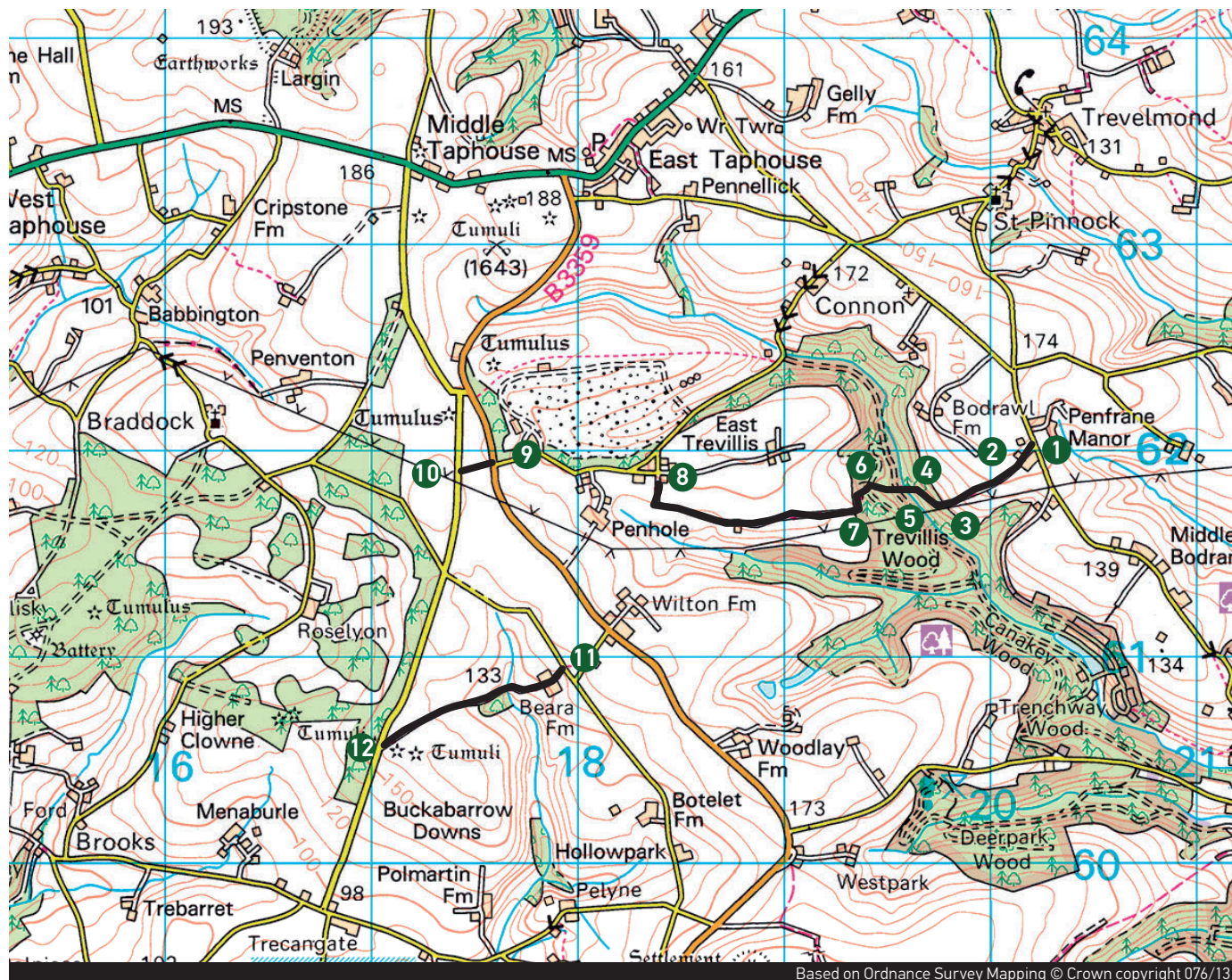


EASY GOING ON A
HARD-COMPACTED TRAIL



WATCH OUT FOR
LOW HANGING BRANCHES





Based on Ordnance Survey Mapping © Crown copyright 076/13

98 TREVILLIS WOOD, CORNWALL

This is a cracking lane just south of Liskeard in Cornwall. It begins easily enough but turns into a long, steady, rocky decent. Once you reach the bottom, there are a couple of rewarding climbs as you proceed along the trail. As there is a tricky muddy section on this lane, it's not really suitable for beginners, plus the rocky decent isn't for the faint of heart.

That said, it's not overly difficult. Just approach it with caution and a sense of adventure. The trail would also be fun to ride in reverse. Once you finish, there is an additional short trail (9-10) which I researched but it isn't recorded on an OS map (not even as a footpath). It certainly looks well used by bikes and there weren't any signs stating otherwise. I've decided to include it but please be aware I cannot be 100% certain of its legal status.



THE FACTS

DISTANCE:
2 miles

NEAREST TOWN:
Liskeard

MAPS:
OS Explorer 107, St Austell and Liskeard

START/END
GRID REFERENCE:
SX20620 / SX170605

DIFFICULTY RATING:
3

WOW FACTOR:
3

OTHER TRAILS:
I rode this green lane while riding the Great Western Trail section of the Trans Euro Trail (TET), so there are plenty of lanes to follow nearby.

THE ROUTE

1-2

Leave the road and ride down a track with an 'unsuitable for motors' sign. The trail starts off as a wide, solid-based track. Pass a few outbuildings and head towards and into the trees.

2-3

The trail is straight ahead with a canopy of green above. It's a solid track with no ruts and is easy riding. Pass a couple of farm gates and start heading downhill. The middle rut here is the easiest, the left rut is a lot deeper. If you mess up and need to dab, chances are you will drop the bike as your legs won't be long enough to reach the bottom of the rut. It's a bit more overgrown here as well. There then follows a rocky decent. Keep going downhill and watch out for loose stones.

3-4

Take a sharp right turn. As you head downhill it gets rockier but it's OK if you take it steady. Further downhill the riding gets more technical with more rocks and a steeper descent. I got off the bike and clutched it for the last little section. I'm not sure why, I think I just lost my bottle being on a bike loaded with camping gear and riding solo, so I opted for the safe option. At the bottom there's

some off-piste activity from 4x4 vehicles. Continue straight ahead then to the left.

4-5

You'll ride some nice deep muddy ruts now. Head up hill into a clearing where a dirt crossroads appears. Head upwards into the trees. It's fairly steep but OK if you commit. The track has a solid base with loose dirt in the middle. Keep going uphill then enter another dirt crossroads.

5-6

It's a lot muddier now. There are two tracks ahead. The left one looked very steep with deep ruts. The right track looked easier. I walked up 50m or so to take a look. Both tracks end up converging. Taking the right track was definitely the easier option.

6-7

Things get very muddy but after the tracks meet the going becomes easier. Keep heading uphill and beneath the trees. A track joins from the left. Head right and uphill. It's easier to pick speed up now.

7-8

Grass appears in the middle of the trail which is long enough to ensure

you will be riding either side of it. The trail opens up a bit towards the end. Round a corner and there will be a few puddles. Continue on and the riding becomes easier as you travel on a fairly wide track with a solid base. Pass farm buildings on your left.

8-9

A tarmac section.

9-10

I can't be 100% certain of the legal status of this section. It's not marked as anything on my OS map (not even a footpath). However, there is a visible trail through the woods. Cross over the main road and down a gnarly trail through the woods. There are some deep, muddy puddles and a lots of tree roots.

10-11

A tarmac section.

11-12

You'll pass some houses and the track is fairly obvious ahead. Ride downhill before the trail opens up and allows you to get some speed up. You'll pass between bracken and through a few puddles. Continue to the tarmac road where this trail ends. **ABR**

THE MIDDLE RUT
IS THE EASIEST ROUTE



A MUDDY CROSSROADS

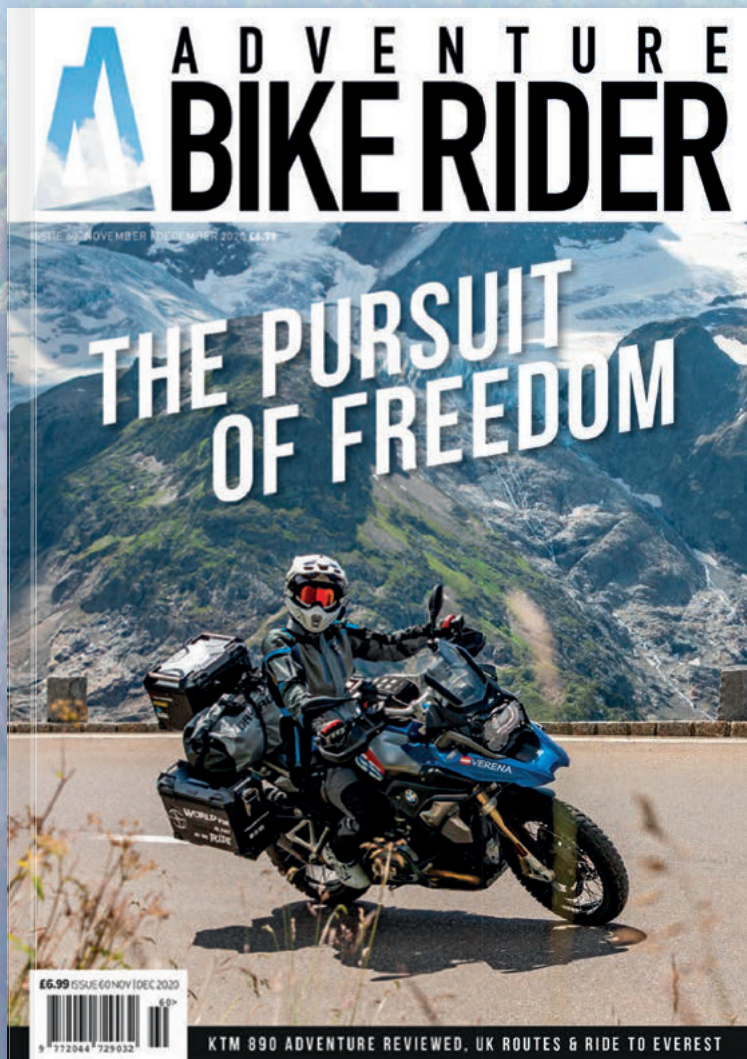


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BE FUN TO RIDE IN REVERSE





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AMAZING BRITAIN

SOUTH EAST

JAMES OXLEY embarks on a journey of British extravagance, eccentricity, and innovation as he explores the amazing history of the south east of England by motorcycle

Finding comfort in an orderly queue, talking endlessly about the weather, and the ability to find a stoic calm in any crisis by making a cup of tea may be traits many of us Brits share, but there is so much more to us than the national stereotypes. Our rich and varied history is interwoven with moments of bravery in the face of adversity, of lavish excess and eccentricity, and of innovation and technological advancement. It's this history that provided the inspiration for the TomTom Amazing Britain series of motorcycle routes, the aim of which is to combine fantastic riding with a number of fascinating, awe-inspiring, quirky, and sometimes downright ridiculous places to explore along the way.

This one-day route in the south east of England nails that aim perfectly. We begin by celebrating the birth of a nation as we visit the Coronation Stone, used during the coronation of the first king of England. From there we explore sites of lavish splendour, seaside eccentricity, and even a community that has a distinctly post-apocalyptic feel. Along the way we ride a selection of splendid roads and discover a little more about what makes this island nation of ours so damn amazing. I purposefully designed the route to end in Folkestone with easy access to the Eurotunnel or the cross-channel ferries in nearby Dover. This gives you the option of starting your next motorcycle tour on the continent a day early with a sensational ride through the south east of England. Let's get started!

THE ROUTE

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Kingston upon Thames Borough Council, KT1 1HD | 8. Beachy Head, BN20 7YA |
| 2. Hampton Court Palace | 9. Battle Abbey, TN33 0AB |
| 3. Box Hill, Tadworth | 10. Dungeness Old Lighthouse, TN29 9NE |
| 4. Norwood Hill, Horley | 11. Taylor Road, Greatstone, TN29 9PA (Sound Mirrors) |
| 5. Turners Hill, RH10 4PT | 12. Lower Sandgate Road, Folkestone |
| 6. Ditchling Beacon (Ditchling Road) | |
| 7. Brighton Pavilion, Brighton, BN1 1EE | |

Total miles: 151 miles



DOWNLOAD THIS ROUTE NOW

Scan the QR code using your smart phone and add this route to your TomTom device.





1. Coronation Stone, Kingston upon Thames

I admit, I thought twice about starting an ABR route inside London's M25 orbital motorway. However, for this Amazing Britain ride we travel back in time to the birth of England and that requires starting our journey in Kingston upon Thames, in the far south west of London. Located in a quiet corner of the grounds of the Guildhall, without fuss or fanfare, sits the Coronation Stone which is believed to have been sat upon by seven Saxon kings while they were crowned. Among those was Althelstan, grandson of King Alfred the Great, and the man widely cited as the first King of England. With typically understated British charm, a small rusty fence is the only thing that stands between you and an artifact that was integral to the birth of a nation. You can literally reach out and touch history.



2. Hampton Court Palace

From understated charm to opulent splendour, we travel the three miles from Kingston upon Thames to Hampton Court Palace, a favourite residence of one of England's most infamous kings, Henry VIII. Despite being best known for his six wives, two of which he sent to their deaths at the hands of an executioner, King Henry's reign had a lasting legacy on the nation through the creation of the Church of England. Reflecting the larger-than-life King Henry, Hampton Court Palace is a perfect depiction of royal grandeur and excess. If you don't have time to take a tour, at least park up nearby and stroll along the grand drive that leads you to the gatehouse of this magnificent palace to get a close up view.



3. Box Hill

From Hampton Court Palace, we delve deep into the leafy lanes of Surrey to Box Hill, located just outside Dorking. The area has been a popular meeting point for motorcyclists for a century thanks to two very good reasons. Firstly, the aptly named Zig Zag Road contorts its way up the hillside through three hairpin turns before levelling out and affording a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. The second reason for Box Hill's popularity with motorcyclists is the fact Ryka's Café is located at the bottom of the hill. This biker stop has been a meeting point for generations of riders and I'd recommend stopping for a bacon bap and a coffee before setting off on the next leg of our journey.



4. Ditchling Beacon

Whether you're a mod or a rocker, a cyclist, or a classic car enthusiast, the London to Brighton run is one of Britain's most iconic road trips. There is a myriad of routes you can take through the meandering country lanes of Surrey and Sussex and, as long as you avoid the busy A24 and A23, you're guaranteed a pleasurable ride through England's green and pleasant land. Our route takes us along a network of leafy lanes and through picturesque villages before making the steep, twisting climb up to Ditchling Beacon, one of the highest points in the South Downs National Park. Make sure you park up at the top to take in the magnificent view and imagine the chain of beacon fires stretching across the land in times gone past, warning of impending invasion from the coast. ►



THE LAVISH SPLENDOR
OF BRIGHTON'S ROYAL PAVILION

5. Royal Pavilion, Brighton

We can see the ocean sparkling in the distance as we ride over the South Downs before descending into the bustling city of Brighton and our next stop, the Royal Pavilion. Park up on the seafront and take a short stroll to this exotic seaside pleasure palace built for King George IV. The extravagant ruler had a lust for decadent living, bringing his enjoyment of drinking and womanising to his favourite seaside retreat. In doing so, he commissioned an architect to transform his Brighton home into a lavish oriental palace featuring distinctive domes and minarets, along with opulent furnishings. The Royal Pavilion remains a landmark in Brighton today, with its royal owner's excesses and eccentricities laying the foundations for modern Brighton, a city famed for its vibrancy and openness.



A VIEW OF THE
LIGHTHOUSE AT BEACHY HEAD

6. Beachy Head

From Brighton we ride along the south coast with the English Channel to our right, through the port of Newhaven, and along a sensational stretch of twisty road as we make our way back into the South Downs National Park to Beachy Head. Leave your bike in the car park and take a walk along the coastline to the UK's highest chalk sea cliff which stands at more than 150m tall. It's the perfect opportunity to stretch your legs and marvel at sweeping views of Britain's famous white cliffs and the carpet of sea ahead. You'll also be following in the footsteps of filmmakers, with James Bond and Harry Potter movies among those to have shot scenes in the area, along with the cult mod film Quadrophonia.



JAMES RIDES INTO BATTLE

7. Battle

Our route continues east along Eastbourne's picturesque seafront and then along country lanes to the small market town of Battle. It was here on 14 October 1066 that the forces of King Harold met those of William, Duke of Normandy, for a battle that would change the course of history. According to legend, King Harold was shot in the eye with an arrow and killed, with William then marching on London and later being crowned King of England. The events that unfolded in Battle led to huge changes, including the blending of French with the Anglo-Saxon language, which led to what we now know as modern English. You can't miss Battle Abbey which looms over the town, the location of which played a pivotal role in the history of Britain. Inside the abbey, the high altar of the church is said to be located on the spot King Harold died.



A NUCLEAR POWER
STATION AT DUNGENESS

8. Dungeness

TomTom Amazing Britain routes are all about combining great riding with fascinating and quirky places to explore on our shores, and Dungeness sums this up very well indeed. The flowing roads that cut across the pancake flat Romney Marsh are a joy to ride as you make your way to a community that feels like it's located at the edge of the world. Dungeness' stark, remote, and windswept beauty is both beguiling, eccentric, and a little unsettling in a ▶



JAMES ADMIRES ONE
OF TWO LIGHTHOUSES AT DUNGENESS



A CLOSE-UP VIEW
OF THE SOUND MIRRORS



FOLKESTONE'S ZIG ZAG PATH



STUNNING VIEWS
OF THE SOUTH EAST

post-apocalyptic kind of way. A jumble of scattered wooden homes, traditionally built around old railway carriages, sit upon a vast shingle beach dotted with old boat wrecks. This community of artists, writers, and fishermen is overlooked by two lighthouses and two nuclear power stations. And, being an English community at world's end, there is of course a local pub.

9. Sound Mirrors, Greatstone

After a short ride along the windswept Coast Drive, we take a left turn and park our bikes at the end of a residential street. From here you get a distant view of the Sound Mirrors. These huge concrete structures were designed to detect the sounds of enemy aircraft approaching as part of a national defence strategy in the late '20s. Tests revealed they gave up to 15-minutes warning of enemy aircraft approaching, but a few years after their creation, they were made obsolete by the invention of radar. If you fancy a close-up look, lock up your bike and take the 15-20-minute walk across the shingle. Be warned, it's quite a trek in motorcycle gear, especially as your boots will sink into the shingle, but I'm glad I made the effort. From Greatstone, we jump back onto the bikes to ride to our final destination of the day and this route.

10. Folkestone's Zig Zag Path

As we approach the end of this TomTom Amazing Britain route, there's time to squeeze in one more quick stop before we head for home, or the warmth of a hotel. About 15 miles down the road from Greatstone is Folkestone's Zig Zag path which was built as a public works scheme in the '20s to provide employment for returning WWI soldiers. The winding walkway contorts its way down the cliff side through a series of caves and grottos, providing stunning coastal views. It's a steep path and a good way to stretch your legs after a long ride. At Folkestone, you have the option to jump onto the M20 and head for home or, if you're heading over to the continent, there are plenty of places to stay in the town or in nearby Dover, which is a short ride along the coast, depending on if you're travelling to France via the tunnel or ferry. **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 and then feature the route online or 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.



CHRIS SCOTT

As the author of the *Adventure Motorcycling Handbook*, Chris Scott has helped countless bikers pursue their dreams of global travel for almost 30 years by providing practical information and advice on exploring the world. With a new edition published in 2020, James Oxley caught up with the man behind the adventure bikers' bible

Tell me about your first adventure on a motorcycle?

At that time (1977), I was into climbing and mountain walking, and Snowdonia was surely doable in a long weekend from London on a Honda SS50? It was February so I was hoping to catch some snow on the peaks. Various navigational blunders and fuelling interruptions made me realise that 250 miles at 32.5mph was perhaps a bigger number than I thought. I didn't even get halfway, but the snow found me.

You're well known for your love of desert travel and the Sahara in particular. What inspired you to take your first journey to the Sahara in 1982, and what impact did it have on you?

By now, I'd discovered trail biking. It was more fun with fewer injuries to bones and licence. But even then, worthwhile trail biking in the South East was a wash out, and with no car licence, Welsh enduros were an effort. At the same time, Dirt Bike magazine from the USA was obtainable in specialist Soho newsagents. It regularly featured the wide open deserts of the western USA. Who wouldn't rather

be there than slithering up some water-logged byway in Surrey? The Mohave was obviously miles away but the Sahara was just over the Mediterranean, which was on the other side of France.

How did these early journeys inspire you to create the first *Adventure Motorcycling Handbook*?

Initially I enjoyed writing up my desert travels for magazines. Then I discovered Amstrad computers and set about putting what I'd learned over 10 years into *Desert Biking*, a report for the Royal Geographical Society's library. Pleased with my results, I thought a travel bookshop in Charing Cross might like to sell copies but they suggested I expand it. A short time later the internet had become a thing so I was able to track down globe-trotting contributors to help fill in the gaps and the *Adventure Motorcycling Handbook* was born.

How did you set about compiling that first edition from scratch?

Actually, I find it easy and logical. Existing guidebooks, and even a Haynes Manual, have a similar contents struc-

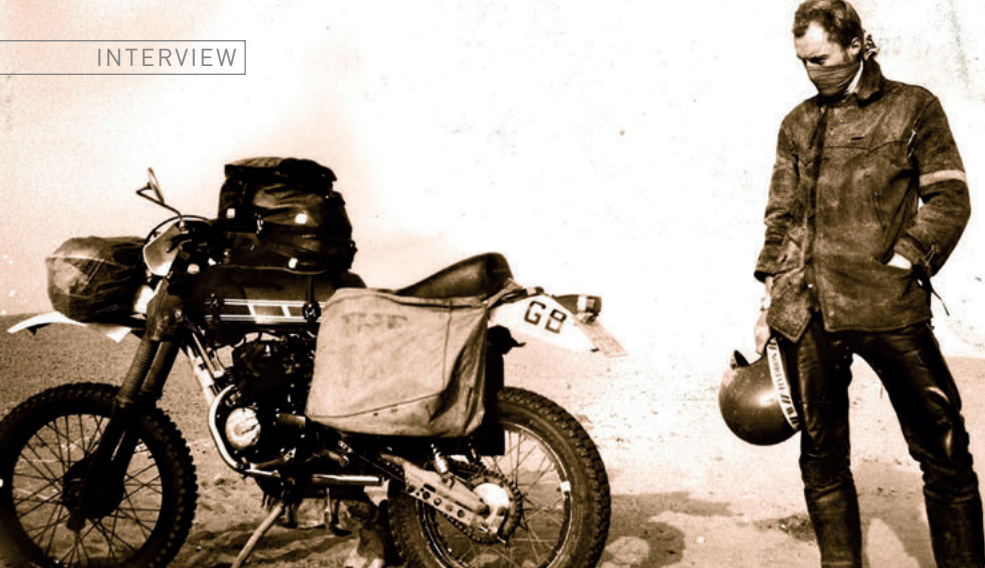
ture: research, preparation, execution. I'd learned that from co-authoring Rough Guides' Australia title. A country breaks down into provinces with cities and towns which have places to stay and eat, and things to see and do. With a number of pages or words, you break it all down, cook up the headings, then fill in the missing words in between.

Is there anything you would have done differently?

You mean with the book? I wouldn't have waited 30 years to go to full colour, even if this hasn't been a running complaint among readers. I'd also offer an ebook version. People ask for this all the time but that's down to the publisher.

Why do you think the *Adventure Motorcycling Handbook* has proved so popular with motorcyclists for more than a quarter of a century?

I set out to write these guidebooks as if I were a clueless first timer looking for guidance and inspiration. With *Adventure Motorcycling Handbook* it also helps that, unlike say a guidebook to France, there's nothing else like it ►



in English. *Adventure Motorcycling Handbook* manages to synthesise the experiences of several for the many while avoiding getting too pompous about the whole 'adventure' thing.

I also think some readers go on to make mistakes anyway, then realise 'oh, *Adventure Motorcycling Handbook* said that would happen' and the penny drops. Advice can only do so much. The best way to learn is from experience.

How has adventure motorcycling and your travel experiences changed over time, and has that altered the way you approach later editions of the handbook?

My travel experiences or interests haven't changed that much other than moving with the times, same as everyone else. Has independent global motorcycle travel increased or are we just watching and reading about it more? I think it clearly has along with all tourism and recreation as freedom, and the means to travel has grown.

One thing I've become aware of in recent editions, and following online chatter, is that what's obvious to me and my peers may not be so to all readers. Not

everyone grew up repairing rat bikes and so need some things explained more fully.

Are you proud to have coined the term 'adventure motorcycling' and how does it feel to have inspired so many people to embark on their own adventures?

Putting two words together which catch on is something writers do once in a while. There are many serendipitous external factors which help make that happen. I do allow myself a brief glow of pleasure on receiving a grateful email, but inspiration is all around. If not the *Adventure Motorcycling Handbook*, it will be something else. What counts is to be receptive to it and to then, if possible, to act on it.

Did you ever imagine adventure motorcycling would become as popular as it has, not only in terms of more people travelling by motorcycle, but also in terms of the motorcycle and travel industries that have grown around it?

Until last March, tourism and recreation have been booming worldwide and motorcycle travel was a part of that. We can thank a brilliant selection of ma-

chines and associated clobber, the advent of GPS and digital mapping, as well as an awareness that what was once thought of as outlandish is easy enough with opportunity and commitment.

The *Long Way Round* television programme definitely contributed to that boom and many tour operators, gear manufacturers, air freight services and so on have benefitted from the dynamic duo's televised adventures. It helps money and people to slosh around the world.

What is it about the Sahara that lures you back time and time again?

I like getting to know one place well and there's more than enough Sahara to fill a lifetime. I like the weather, geology, pre-history and the space. I get off on the adventure and exploration too, the need for planning and problem solving, plus the navigation and the satisfaction of self sufficiency.

Travelling is a time machine. A fossil or volcanic extrusion may be millions of years old, a stone hand axe dates from the Palaeolithic, and rock art from 6,000 BC. A desert village may have changed little in centuries and that sand-blasted jerrican ►



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You've travelled on plenty of motorcycles over the years but is there a particular bike that sticks in your mind as your favourite for overland travel?

I change bikes a lot. It's where they can get me plus the ease and fun with which they do that counts. Recently I enjoyed the Royal Enfield Himalayan and the Yamaha XSR700, Yamaha, please make a desert sled scrambler of that brilliant CP2 motor. So, on a similar theme, I like the idea of scrambling a Royal Enfield Interceptor. It wouldn't take much to make that a great travel bike with character and presence but without spending a fortune.

Do you think the world's experiences with Covid-19, and the resulting temporary loss of freedoms, will encourage more people to pursue their dreams of motorcycle travel in the future?

There will be a rebound but I suspect we've just passed peak global travel and tourism. Things won't get back to how they were. Whether it's the small risk of catching the virus in a faraway land, the

bigger impact of restrictions and regulations or, not least, the economic uncertainty many everywhere are facing, that game is over for the moment.

And on top of the pandemic's still unfinished impact, current political trends and the coming disruption from changing weather patterns probably means we're witnessing the end of global motorcycle travel at the scale and ease to which we've become accustomed.

I recently spoke to Charley Boorman about his experiences with electric bikes on the Long Way Up. Could we be seeing electric motorcycles popping up in future editions of the Adventure Motorcycling Handbook?

I may give *Long Way Up* a go if I can pack it into a free trial, though I didn't get past the fart-lighting episode in *Long Way Down*. The two have a great rapport but electric bikes were a made-for-TV stunt. Fair enough but can you imagine undertaking such a trip without back-up right now? Of course not.

Until the day we can roll up to a battery recharge bank in Cusco, Khabarovsk, or Kumasi, swap batteries and ride off,

electric bikes are going to be restricted to cities or other short-range applications. I was pleased to read recently that the Big Four's (Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki, and Kawasaki) e-Yan Osaka project to share replaceable battery technology is moving along. 'That will be cool' as Charlie might say, but it's surely a decade away.

If you could give one piece of advice to a budding adventure motorcycle traveller, what would it be?

The more you know the less you need.

What's next for you? Do you have any travels or new books planned?

My Africa Twin has been stuck in Morocco since the outbreak with a hole in the sump. That needs repair and recovery when the coast is clear. Right now, I'm busy designing and writing a kayak book for a British publisher. I've been writing about that for many years, and following a post-lockdown surge of interest in paddle sports, it's time to make a new kind of hay while the sun does shine.

Find out more about Chris' travels at www.adventure-motorcycling.com. **ABR**



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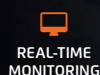


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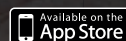
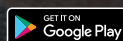
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TACKLING THE TET

LAND'S END OR BUST



JULIAN CHALLIS continues his exploration of the UK on the Trans Euro Trail as he travels from Bristol to the south west tip of England at Land's End

If there is one thing that this awful pandemic has taught us all, it's to value and cherish the people and things that are close to us. And right now, thrashing through achingly beautiful Devon lanes with a group of mates on a big red dirt bike, this could not be more apparent.

While my 2020 diary might have become filled with page after page of cancelled trips and missed opportunities, blasting along the fantastic roads and lanes of the Great Western Trail section of the Trans Euro Trail (TET) has to be the best possible antidote to start of the new decade. Motorcycling may have taken me all over the world but right now, this is the only place I want to be, and it feels fantastic.

Regular readers of *ABR* will doubtless be aware of my three-year love affair with the UK leg of the Trans Euro Trail, so consequently this post lockdown adventure will come as no particular surprise. Since a bitterly cold morning way back February 2018, when my intrepid companions and I set off from Dover, we've

ridden the whole of the British TET in four bite-sized adventures: Dover to Chepstow, Chepstow to Crewe, Crewe to Kendal, and finally last year, Kendal to Newcastle, to complete all 1,800 miles of the original route. First off, I was on the Ténéré 660 which proved a handful on those chilly southern lanes. The middle two sections were on my far more slimline KTM 250 EXC, and the final schlep was on KTM's rather wonderful 690 Enduro R which proved to be almost the perfect bike for the task.

But since we started the original TET two years ago, the route has got a whole lot bigger, largely thanks to the efforts of James Higgs of the Wiltshire Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF). Doubtless keen to ensure that riders both domestic and foreign were not deprived of the wonderful lanes that were on his doorstep, the estimable Mr Higgs has crafted a truly wonderful southern leg to the TET, a delightfully meandering route that dives down through Wiltshire and Dorset before heading south to Devon and then Cornwall. After taking in Land's End, the route follows a different path back up through the same counties to re-join the main TET in Somerset. The name, with its obvious references to ►



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.

Brunel's railway could not be more appropriate. It truly is a Great Western Trail across a region packed with superb riding.

So finally, some two-and-a-half years after our first TET trip, and following four months of near constant gardening, DIY and binge-watching box sets thanks to a global lockdown, the five members of the Great Western Trail 2020 squad assembled bright and early at the side of the River Avon within sight of the Clifton Suspension Bridge. OK, so the Great Western Trail, or indeed the TET, does not actually go into Bristol, but it seemed a suitably auspicious place to start the trip with Brunel's wonderful engineering making a fitting start point to our journey. With the whole of the route totalling more than 800 miles, we'd elected to make this a four-day trip from Bristol to Land's End rather than try to tick off the whole route over a week.

On the squad, we have trip organiser Matt on his SWM RS 300R, Chris on his trusty Honda CRF250X, Alex on an incredibly tidy 2003 Suzuki DRZ400, Steve on a Honda CRF250L, and me on the ABR long termer Honda CRF450L bristling with upgrades and trinkets. Luggage options for the trip are as varied as the bikes, with Matt and Steve going for enduro panniers and rucksacks, myself with a rack mounted rear pack, tank, and fender bags, Chris with his now trademark 'middle of Lidl' panniers and rear bags topped off with a child's Captain America rucksack that he found outside a house during lockdown. Finally, there is Alex who has invested in arguably the world's largest tank bag. It's a good job he's a tall lad as it towers almost 3' above the tank.

SETTING OFF

With the start line photographs fired off and Matt's delivery of warm sausage rolls quickly dispatched, our journey begins as we weave through Bristol to pick up the trail to the east at Keynsham. Somewhat worryingly, Matt's SWM sounds terrible, but he's been assured that it's just a loose cam chain and it's good for 500 miles, a prediction that will later turn out to be both optimistic and indeed inaccurate. We pick up the Great Western Trail just off the A4 and it leads us though the outskirts of Keynsham and onto the first lane, a familiar but nonetheless tricky one thanks to the chunky hardcore that forms the surface on the short climb to re-join the road.

With all successfully at the top, we follow a path that most Bristol-based trail riders will know well, taking in sweeping country lanes and some great byways as we curve round the bottom of Bath towards Wellow. If you do decide to follow the Great Western Trail on a bigger adventure bike, then many of the early lanes of this section will present some very real challenges. Be prepared to turn back on quite a few unless you are Chris Birch, and at all costs don't try the snotty little bugger at Inglesbatch, it will end in tears.

Just outside Wellow, we stop for a breather and to adjust clothing for the rapidly warming weather. We also need to resecure our various luggage options from their first proper shakedown test. Half an hour later, we've followed the route through to the eastern



A WONDERFUL
SUNKEN DORSET LANE



THE START LINE IN BRISTOL



A QUAIN BRIDGE
CROSSING AT HUCKWORTHY



CROSSING
SALISBURY PLAIN

SO, WHAT IS THE TET?

The Trans Euro Trail stretches almost 32,000 miles across most of Europe from the top of Scandinavia, right down almost to the top of Africa. Put together by a group of motorcyclists with nothing more than a love of riding rather than any commercial motivation, it's a truly outstanding achievement and an incredible gift to bikers across the world. Simply by going to the website, www.transeurotrail.org, you can pick the country you want to ride in, and with the click of a mouse, download a GPX file of the route. You can do as much or as little as you want, safe in the knowledge that the routes will be legal, enjoyable, and thoroughly rewarding.



THE HONDA POSES IN
FRONT OF THE CERNE GIANT



EXPLORING DARTMOOR'S
ROADS IN THE SUNSHINE



ENJOYING A COFFEE
BREAK AT COMPTON

edge of Bath and we drop down to cross the tiny toll bridge at Bathampton, with Matt paying the 50p per bike for all of us in his role as 'trip dad'. We continue up toward the popular cycling climb at Bannerdown, before diverting for a great little byway. It's not so great for Steve, as stopping to close a gate, his dismount goes terribly wrong when he catches his foot on his pannier strap and swiftly ends up trapped on the ground by his little CRF. Luckily his mates were there to help, laugh, and take photos in equal amounts.

A few miles and a few lanes later we enter Wiltshire, and at Colerne, we gradually begin to head south east. A brief stop in Pickwick refreshes the fuel tanks and provides an impromptu brunch before we continue. The weather is improving all the time and we are treated to a wonderful selection of country roads and sun dappled lanes for mile after mile. We're gradually heading for Salisbury Plain in a rambling kind of way and the TET linesman has done a cracking job of showing us the best of tarmac and trail that the county can offer. A brief overgrown lane takes us up onto the plain and for close on an hour we're treated to long and sweeping gravel trails that are simply joyful in the summer sun.

We stop for a much-needed pint of shandy at Durrington before another refuel stop and a forecourt sandwich lunch. The route then takes us through the achingly beautiful Woodford Valley, following the River Avon as it lazily flows through the landscape. Skirting Salisbury, it's more breath-taking scenery and roads as we head for one of the longest trails on the Great Western Trail, the ancient Shaftesbury Ox Drove that runs for mile after mile of fantastic riding through arches of trees and above the rolling hills south of Shaftesbury. We stop at Compton Airfield for ice creams and take in the busy toing and froing of the tiny planes as they too enjoy the glorious sunshine.

The final part of the day is swiftly despatched in a mix of winding country lanes, tight overgrown trails, and thanks to the progress we've made, a late afternoon pint, before pulling up to our first billet, The Full Moon in Sherbourne, just a few miles away from the route and some 151 miles from our start point in Bristol. The evening is made even sweeter when we get invited to the soft opening of a tapas bar opposite the pub where they insist that food is free, and we just need to pay for drinks. Casa Abadia, we love you.

A DAMP START

Day two dawns, and somewhat annoyingly, the promised overnight rain has persisted into a soft drizzle as we pull out of Sherbourne to rejoin the Great Western Trail outside Shilkingstone. We ride south west on mainly damp and slippery roads interspersed with lanes where the wet vegetation drenches us further. Matt detours to take in the vast Cerne Abbas Giant for the obligatory photos and knob jokes before continuing on as the drizzle tries to become rain. The frequent climbs on marble size rocks become treacherous and I rapidly begin to question my decision to fit a brand-new mousse to my rear Dunlop. It might be impossible to puncture, but right now I could really do with dropping pressures.

My problems however fade into insignificance compared to Matt, who's bike is sounding even worse than yesterday. It eventually gives up the ghost just outside Bridport, and despite Alex being a professional mechanic and whipping apart the engine faster than most of us could change a bulb, his skills can't extend to mending a shattered camshaft sprocket bearing at the side of the road. It's a case of 'for you Tommy, ze war is over' and reluctantly we have to leave him to wait for the RAC recovery truck.

To overcome this blow, we immediately head over to a craft beer pub in Bridport for lunch. Dragging ourselves away amid the rapidly improving weather and lovely ales, we are soon treated to some truly epic sunken lanes through deep rock chasms at ►

CRUISING A TREE-LINED AVENUE IN DORSET



THE SQUAD GATHER JUST OUTSIDE TRURO



JULIAN ENJOYS A VIEW OF ST MICHAEL'S MOUNT



WHAT BIKE IS BEST FOR THE TET?

According to the TET website, the Trans Euro Trail is 'aimed at small and medium capacity trail bikes - bikes such as Yamaha's WR250R and XT600 and XT660Z Ténéré, CCM's GP450, KTM's 690 and Suzuki's DRZ400. Larger bikes can tackle it, but riders need to be more experienced and competent.'

Clear enough? For our part, we've ridden the UK TET on a range of bikes from a Yamaha Ténéré 660 to a KTM 250 EXC, with other riders on everything from a Honda CRF250X and a BMW G 650 GS, to a Honda CB500X. Although the Ténéré and the BMW did the job, they were far harder work in some sections than the lighter bikes, and the CB500X was largely unsuitable for much of the route save the tarmac. In the end it doesn't matter what you ride as long as you stay within your limits and enjoy the experience.

Symondsburry. It's a privilege to ride in such a magical place even if the photos can't quite capture this wonderful part of Dorset. Our route away from the lane is somewhat delayed by a stropky woman on a mountain bike who clearly objects to our presence on the planet and appears to want four motorcycles following her down a tight lane. When we eventually get past, we smile and wave, fighting back with love, not hate.

Our route continues west across the top of the Jurassic Coast with occasional glimpses of the sea to our left, the trail following a wonderful variety of roads, tracks and tunnel lanes. If you are looking for big speeds, look somewhere else as the Great Western Trail rarely touches a main road for more than a few miles. We drop down towards Lyme Regis and back out again, and a few miles later, pass through Exmouth and Seaton. After a swift refuel and coffee, we drop down a tricky stony lane into Beer before climbing back out on a wonderfully sweeping track that goes from left to right like a rock-filled slalom run.

We then follow the south coast over the top of Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton before an extended road section takes us through the south of Exeter and back down towards the sea at Dawlish. We cross the river at Teignmouth and we're all getting tired now so the handful of cracking little lanes above Shaldon are just enough to lift the spirits before we break off the route and head to our hotel in Babbacombe just before 7pm. A tea of fish and chips from Drakes Fish and Chips soon revives us an hour or so later, as do a few scoops overlooking the millpond smooth water as the sun sinks into the Atlantic. What a day.

NOISY NEIGHBOURS

The departure on day three cannot come fast enough for any of us. Alex and Steve had been woken in the small hours by their hotel neighbour returning extremely drunk and spending many hours shouting, singing, and subsequently snoring. Chris and I had entirely different interruptions earlier in the night when it seemed likely that the room next door was being used for an amateur porn shoot. Either that or the young lady involved was enthusiastically agreeing with someone for an unfeasibly long period of time.

With the luggage repacked and the bikes fired up, we dive back towards Shaldon to resume the Great Western Trail, and from the moment we hit the first lane the day just gets better and better. Wonderful sunken Devon lanes are interspersed with joyful and sinuous back roads and gravel tracks. We sweep from side to side up rocky steps, clatter down tricky descents, and carve lines through the rich Devon mud. Within half an hour or so we are cruising through the rolling contours of the South Hams area, a region that the Bristol TRF visit regularly for the rich palette of wonderful roads and exquisite trails.

We head away from the farm along some stunning trails, heading past Ivybridge to pick up the bottom edge of Dartmoor and the epic roads that criss-cross the national park. We ride over Cadover Bridge on the upper stretches of the River Plym where holiday makers are parked up and children are swimming in the cool water and jumping into the river from the bridge. There's a definite 1930's feel to the scene and it's lovely to see people enjoying themselves. Just before lunch we find a partially blocked ford on the route, but it doesn't defeat Alex as he heroically jumps the mighty DRZ from the bank into the water, the thump doubtless detectable back in Bristol.

We stop at Maevy for an unexpectedly sumptuous lunch sat on the village green outside The Royal Oak. It would be too easy to stay here for the rest of the day, but I crack the whip to get us back on the road. We start the afternoon with a bit of wife swapping as both Chris and Alex want to try the CRF. Both come away with a big grin. The afternoon passes in a delightful blur of delicious

roads and great lanes. It is without doubt the best section of the trip and comes thoroughly recommended whatever bike you are riding. Chris is leading and throws in the odd additional lane he's researched beforehand as we zig zag gently up towards Tavistock and cross the River Tamar into Cornwall.

Our route heads down to Callington and Liskeard and then towards the coast again. With the sun dropping in the sky we stop by the River Fowey at Lerryn for ice creams and then realise the same shop sells Doom Bar beer in bottles. It would be rude not too. An hour or so later we roll into our final lodgings for the night, the appropriately named Duke of Cornwall.

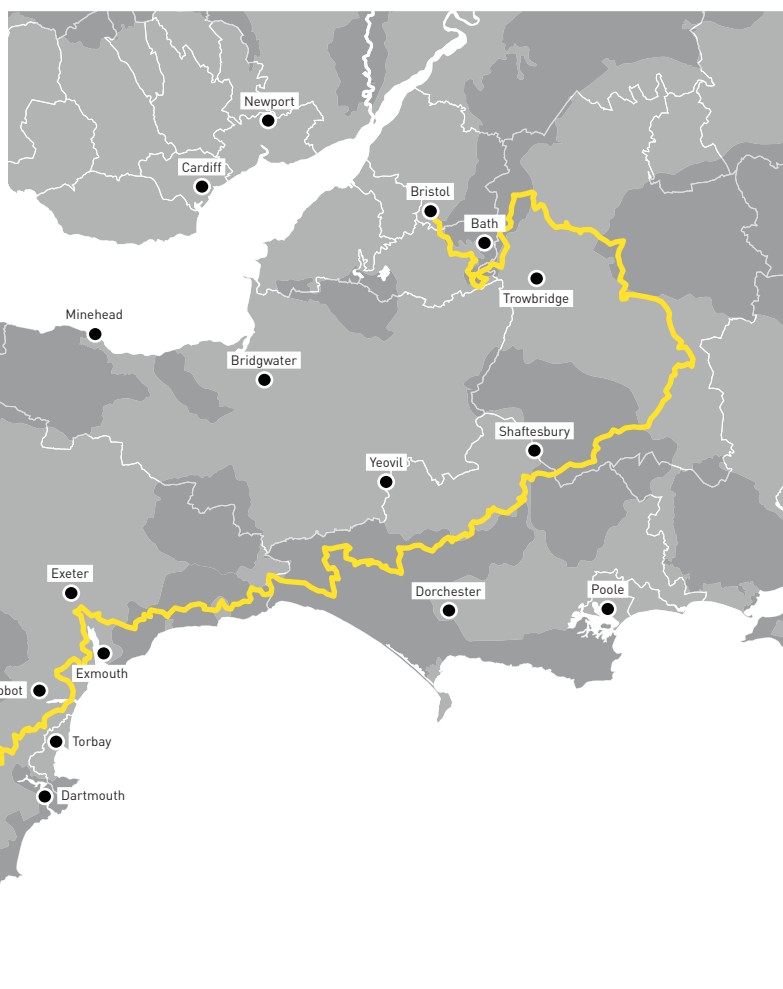
CORNISH CREAM

The final day dawns in St Austell, and although we've only got a short distance to cover, we're up and out of the pub car park at 8.30am. Although we're expecting a lot of tarmac today, the Great Western Trail soon turns onto a morning's worth of great tracks and life affirming lanes and back roads. There's a noticeable difference in the trails that are now wider farm tracks framed with overhead trees, rather than the tight and winding trails in Devon. The country roads are different too, the stunning views often obscured by the high banks that line both sides of the blacktop like some vast countywide Cresta Run.

We drop into Truro for a few miles, the vast Cathedral thrusting up into the deep blue Cornish sky above the rooftops. We follow Alex out of the city and over a tract of sweet-smelling moorland, eventually reaching Twelveheads, an area scattered with the skeletal remains of the dozen pitheads that once dominated the community. Pressing on south west towards Helston and the coast, the route goes right past the golden beach at Praa Sands, so we stop for a brunch of pasties and tea among the smiling holidaymakers scattered across the beach.

The final section of our journey takes us along the coast, through Marazion with stunning views of St Michael's Mount, into Penzance, and around to the tiny harbour at Mousehole. There's just one more tight little lane to negotiate before I lead my three companions on a fast and sweeping blast along the B3315 through Boleigh, Trethewey and Trevescan under cloudless skies. We reach Land's End just after 1pm, posing with the bikes for the obligatory photos outside the slightly gaudy visitor centre.

So that's it. A total of 501 miles over four glorious days on the best of routes through the South West of England. We've clattered through overgrown lanes, blasted along glorious deserted tarmac, and had a fantastic time with a great group of mates. Travelling all over the world might be off the agenda for a while, but with routes like this on our doorstep, I'm not sure I care. The Great Western Trail is epic. **ABR**



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Ask Dave

PHOTOGRAPHY

FILE FOR SUCCESS

SIMON THOMAS EXPLAINS HOW SHOOTING IN THE CORRECT FILE FORMAT CAN HELP YOU CAPTURE THE RAW BEAUTY OF THE WORLD IN YOUR TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY

I sipped on a hot coffee as I thought about what photographic wisdom to impart in this issue of *ABR*. I know I've missed telling you something simple but crucial, I thought. Then it hit me. File formats and what to shoot in. I know, not as exciting as a shampoo head massage from a supermodel but the info in this article is a game changer.

Before we get into the nitty gritty of file types, now's a good opportunity to recap the basics. For photographers, and yes that includes you, there are three main file formats. JPG, TIFF and RAW. This is true whether you're shooting on a stunningly expensive DSLR or your iPhone.

The primary difference between these formats is whether they are compressed or not. Files that are compressed like JPGs are referred to as 'lossy'. Formats that are uncompressed, such as TIFF or RAW are generally referred to as 'lossless'. Pretty simple so far, right? If you're mingling with the photo crowd and you want to sound like you know what you're talking about, you can refer to RAW files as digital negatives. We'll get to this in a bit.

STUFFING YOUR CARD

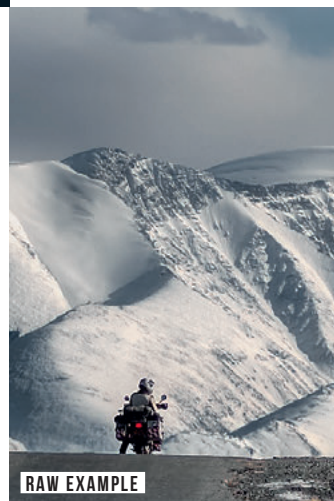
So, what's the big deal? The most popular image format on the planet is JPG which you'll see everywhere, from the images on your favourite website, to the photo files your phone produces. Take a second to read the last few letters at the end of the file name of your favourite image of your bike on your phone and you'll most likely see .JPG on the screen.

The two main advantages to setting up your camera to shoot in JPG mode are, firstly, you can easily and quickly share your photos with friends and family as JPGs can be read by almost every electronic device on the planet, irrespective of style or brand. The other advantage is that, because the images are compressed, you can literally stuff hundreds if not thousands of images onto your camera's memory card. Great right?

THE DARK SIDE OF JPGS

Yes, there is a downside to using JPGs and it's a big one. The JPG format is lossy and, in order to compress the image file to a smaller size, your camera has to dump image data and then compress what is left. Let me explain. Your average 22MP (megapixel) camera records around 28MB (megabytes) of data for each photo. If you've selected the JPG option in your camera's file format menu, your camera will produce JPG files that are approximately 7MB in size.

So, where did the other 21MB of data go? When your camera converts and compresses your image to a JPG file, it throws away image data never to be seen again. Fundamentally, you're getting a watered-down version of what your camera actually saw. To make the image file smaller, you lose colour data, detail data, and contrast data, hence you're only seeing a fraction of what your camera is really able to produce. To my mind this is a fool's economy and undermines all the legitimate reasons you probably upgraded to a better camera or phone in the first place.



IT'S A BIT LIKE A DUCATI, REALLY...

Think of it in terms of a motorcycle. Your 22MP camera is a brand Ducati Multistrada 1260 S, capable of 150mph. Selecting JPG only mode is like riding your Ducati in first gear only, on cheap fuel, using re-tread tyres. Seriously, why would you? To make matters worse, JPG files are substantially less editable than RAW files, so if you're thinking about post processing or enhancing your favourite photo because *Adventure Bike Rider's* editor wants it as the next cover shot, you are going to struggle.

RAW files are bigger. There it is, but with memory cards and external hard drives being cheaper today than they ever have been, the extra size really isn't a big deal. If you're a pro or simply want to produce the best image possible, then RAW is the file format to select. The RAW file is effectively all the data and colour your camera saw and captured when you pressed the shutter release button. All the extra data in the image means you can post process, using programs like Photoshop or my favourite LUMINAR4, and if you want to print the image, you can print it at A3 size or bigger.

SIZE MATTERS

The superior quality, detail and flexibility of RAW files is why they are often referred to a 'digital negatives'. They hold and show all the detail, depth, drama, and colour that your camera's sensor actually recorded. It's important to keep in mind that RAW files are proprietary and each camera brand uses a different RAW format. But manufacturers supply software with your camera so you can view the RAW files and even convert them to JPG or TIFF files to share with your friends or family. FYI, TIFF files can be easily read just like JPG files by most electronic devices but they are uncompressed and very large.

The great news is that most modern digital cameras will shoot and record both RAW and JPG simultaneously. So, you don't have to choose just one format at the expense of the other. Check through your camera file format menu and select 'dual recording' and then select RAW + JPG (fine). With this chosen, your camera will record your photos as both a RAW file and a high-quality JPG file. You've now got the best of both worlds. All the detail and quality of the RAW file and the convenience of the JPG file.

Remember, have fun, experiment and you'll get some cracking results. If you get a moment, share your favourite images with us at facebook.com/2ridetheworld. **ABR**



WHO'S WRITING?

Photographer: Lisa Thomas. Location: Pamir Mountain Range, Silk Route, Tajikistan.
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 D70s

LENS: Nikor 70.0-300.0 mm f/4.0-5.6

FOCAL LENGTH: 157.0 mm

FOCUS MODE: Manual

APERTURE: f/7.1

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/800 seconds

EXPOSURE MODE: manual

EXPOSURE COMP: -1

METERING: Spot

ISO SENSITIVITY: ISO 200

WHITE BALANCE: Standard

SPEED LIGHT/FLASH: Did not fire

PICTURE PROFILE: Warm

SHARPENING: 0

CONTRAST: 0

BRIGHTNESS: 0

SATURATION: 0

HUE: 0

PROCESSED WITH: Luminar 4



TECHNIQUES

FOUR SIMPLE RULES

MISTI HURST REVEALS HOW TO TAKE YOUR RIDING ABILITY TO THE NEXT LEVEL BY MASTERING FOUR BASIC SKILLS

In this age of instant gratification, many people seem to be looking for a quick fix for everything. When it comes to motorcycling, that often means they want to know how they can transform their riding overnight in order to ride their bikes harder and faster.

In my role as a coach with the California Superbike School, people often ask me how they can make their bikes faster, and how can they become a better rider in as little time as possible? Their solution is usually to buy a faster, more powerful bike. The problem is they seem to have forgotten that learning basic riding skills is the only way to create a solid foundation to build a riding career upon. Put simply, you can't become really great at something until you master the basics.

The same goes for adventure bikers looking to improve their riding over curving mountain passes. Perhaps you're struggling to keep up with your mates on tour in the twisties. I can tell you now, the answer certainly isn't to buy a faster, more powerful, and most likely heavier machine. Instead, I tell people to start with the rider. When they get defensive and start whining about how slow or crappy their bike is, I ask them: "Could Chris Birch or Valentino Rossi ride your bike better and faster than you?" The answer is always a pouty, "yes." So, let's look at why.

The best racers in the world have a solid grasp of the basics of good riding, which of course translates to successful riding on the road. They know how to ride motorcycles and they know how to ride them well. They understand the importance of good throttle control and of impeccable visual skills. When they want to go faster, they systematically work through a series of steps that help them to do this.

So, what are the basics of good riding? It starts with good throttle control. Knowing when to get on the throttle and how to roll it on throughout a corner is an important start. I teach that you should get on the throttle as soon as possible, and to roll it on

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.

smoothly, constantly, and evenly throughout the remainder of the turn. Any on-off throttle action, or jerky motions can throw off the overall stability of the bike and make it seem like the bike is the problem, when it's really the rider.

Next, focus on counter steering and becoming exceptional at changing the direction of your motorcycle. To break it down as simply as possible, you push the right bar to make the bike go right and you push the left bar to make the bike go left. It's easy. The more consistent you get with your bar inputs, and the more effective you get at initiating them, the smoother and more precise your turning will become. Turning a motorcycle is important so get good at it.

Next, master your relationship with your motorcycle and how you move with it. When you ride, you want to go with the bike as if you were being an amazingly good passenger. Where the bike goes, you go with it effortlessly, easily, and smoothly. The



less resistance you have with the bike (death gripping the bars, fighting the direction, opposing the turns, leaning away from the corners) the less compliant the bike is. Follow its lead and become one with your machine.

Finally, your visual skills define how good a rider you will become. Poor visual input equals poor physical output. You are only as good as your eyes, so put time and effort into getting good at spotting your apex, knowing where you want to be on the road, keeping tabs on what is going on around you, not getting sucked into target fixating, and not allowing your field of vision to narrow down to tunnel vision. These are all important things that are necessary in training your mind and your body into becoming as good a rider as you can be.

I remember one time when I was trying to qualify for a motorcycle race and I was struggling. I was feeling frustrated about the fact that I was far away from the lap time I needed to

qualify and I didn't think I was going to make the grid. I began complaining about my bike, saying that it wasn't responding as well as it should and that I couldn't get it to go where I wanted. My mechanic at the time looked me straight in the eyes and said: "Ride it faster then." What he meant was that it was me who was holding the bike back, and that until I went faster using my own skills, he wasn't going to let me blame the bike or change anything. I went back to the beginning and worked my way through the basics in order to find the times I needed, which worked out.

So, just like a piano player needs to practice scales, a singer needs to practice pitch, rhythm, and breathing, and a tennis player needs to understand grip and court placement, a motorcyclist needs to have a solid grasp of the basics of riding in order to become the very best rider possible. Don't try and skip the fundamentals or look for an easy way to the top. Good technique always builds on basic skills. **ABR**



LEGAL

PILLION RIDERS AND THE LAW

SHOULD YOU TELL YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY YOU INTEND TO CARRY A PASSENGER? AND WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY CAUSE AN ACCIDENT? ABR'S LEGAL EXPERT **ANDREW DALTON** EXPLAINS ALL

You wouldn't think the law has a great deal to say about pillion passengers, but you'd be wrong. If you have a full motorcycle licence, you can carry a pillion passenger as long as they are wearing an approved helmet. That pillion must also have a British Standard approved visor or goggles or go bare eyed.

If you carry a pillion who is not wearing a helmet, and who is not a turbaned adherent of the Sikh faith, as a matter of law, the pillion is committing an offence which you are aiding and abetting. In English law, aiding and abetting an offence carries the same punishment as the actual offence. However, you'd have to get a very annoyed police officer and a determined prosecutor to write you up for aiding and abetting. So, how far does your duty to the pillion extend? You owe your pillion the same duty of care as you owe any other road user, which is to ride with reasonable care and skill and, if as a result of your negligence harm befalls your pillion, your insurer will pay out for the harm caused to them.

Do you need to declare that you carry a pillion on your insurance proposal? The answer is, if you carry a pillion, then you must declare it. As a matter of road traffic law, your insurer must meet the claim of any person who succeeds in obtaining a judgement against you for damages. If that person is your pillion, and you have told your insurer that you do not carry a pillion, your insurer has some pretty hefty remedies against you, the most obvious of which is coming after you for the damages which they have paid out. If you have no assets, they may just make you bankrupt. If you have assets, they will take them off you if they possibly can. Carrying a pillion does not seem to have a significant loading on insurance. Even if you



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.

think there is a chance you might occasionally take a pillion, then get pillion cover. My only bikes which do not have pillion cover have no rear footpegs.

But what if your pillion does something stupid? As a young man, I occasionally put my brother on the back of my bike. He was, and is, a big lad. For his amusement, particularly if there was a police officer around, he would cheerfully lean his 16-stone prop forward's body backwards, pushing my front wheel skywards. Luckily when I was a young man, the police had a sense of humour, although I stopped letting him on the back of my bike. As a matter of law, your insurance covers you for acts of negligence carried out by your pillion but only to third parties if the loss flows from the use of the vehicle. The only time I have seen this become a factor is where a pillion has dismounted too close to a car and scuffed it with a boot. However, claims arising against pillions are very rare, even ones as daft as my brother in his younger days. **ABR**

SENA

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ASK DAVE

**ABR'S EXPERT OF ALL THINGS TWO-WHEELED
ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS**

Q. Hi Dave, I've just bought a new bike with 9,000-mile service intervals, which is great for keeping the servicing costs down, but is there anything I should do myself in between those services to keep it running smoothly and in good condition?

**Thanks
Graham**

Hi Graham

Service intervals are usually based on mileage or time. Yours is 9,000 miles, or every 12 months, depending on what comes first. However, there is plenty you can do between those service intervals to keep your bike looking good and running sweetly.

The first thing on my servicing schedule is a thorough clean. I know there are people that use the phrase 'bikes are for riding not polishing', but cleaning a bike enables me to inspect all the components and identify loose spokes, frayed cables, broken electrical connections, loose nuts or bolts... you get the idea.

Once your bike is dry and looking like the day you bought it, start with a pre-ride inspection. Check tyre pressures and give the tread a close look for any foreign objects, nails, bits of metal, or stones. Check the oil level, coolant, and brake fluid. Start the bike up and check all the lights are working. If luggage is fitted, make sure it's firmly attached. It's good practice to make these checks a routine, like making sure you have your wallet.

I like to perform a more thorough service monthly or before and after a long trip or tour. Lube the clutch and

throttle cables if fitted (there are gadgets available to make this easy), clean, lube, and adjust the chain, and if the chain can be pulled from the sprocket, it may well be time for a replacement. Have a look at your brake pads. If there isn't much pad left, it's an easy and cheap job to fit replacements.

Motorcycle tyres tend not to give particularly high mileage and may need replacing between services. You can fit them yourself but I'd recommend getting them changed by a professional who will check the balance after fitting. Modern motorcycle wheels can also be a pain to swap tyres on manually. Also check your tyre pressures regularly and top them up if needed.

It costs nothing to take out your motorcycle's air filter and give it a clean, it's surprising what can be found after a summer tour. I also like to do a mid-service oil and filter change to keep everything running smoothly.

Finally, a good quality polish on all the bodywork protects it and will help keep the value in the bike. A tatty bike will never sell for top money. If you ride through the winter, a thorough treatment of ACF50 or similar will protect the bike from the ravages of the road salt used to keep us upright.

With all this going on, your new bike should prove a reliable companion on all your adventures. **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**.



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THE INSIDER'S GUIDE: RIDE TO EVEREST BASE CAMP

Tour operator **ALEX PIRIE** from Nomadic Knights reveals what it takes to ride a motorcycle to the highest mountain in the world

Photos: Iain Crockart

In association with:



WHO'S WRITING?

As founder and ride leader of Nomadic Knights, Alex has been leading people on life-changing motorcycle adventures through India, Nepal, and to Mount Everest in Tibet for the past 12 years. After previous careers in sales, management, and then running his own business in the UK, a craving for adventure led him on a motorcycle ride across India. It was the first of many epic adventures which instilled in Alex a desire to help others experience such journeys, and Nomadic Knights was born.

M

ount Everest has captivated the imaginations of the daring and pitted man against nature for generations. Reaching its peak is the Holy Grail of mountaineering, a place where heroes are made, dreams are realised, and an obsession to conquer the highest mountain in the world can finally be

laid to rest. But Everest's story is also one of tragedy, of loss, of death. Its frozen faces are as lethal as they are beautiful, but despite the danger, its seductive lure continues to act as a siren call to the ears of those of us born with a lust for adventure.

Motorcyclists certainly aren't immune to that call which explains why riding to Everest Base Camp has become one of the world's ultimate adventure biking experiences. It's a journey that will stay with you for the rest of your life. Here's something to think about. The next time you're at a dull dinner party, someone might mention their recent trip to Disneyland, or perhaps their luxury cruise in the Caribbean. That all sounds perfectly pleasant but watch everyone's jaws drop when you tell them you rode a motorcycle to Mount Everest, a name shrouded in myth and legend that everyone has known since childhood. It's a truly awesome ride to undertake.

BACKGROUND

I've been asked many times by riders I've led on tours to base camp: "How will I know when I see Mount Everest?" Make no mistake, she needs no introduction. You will be in awe when you see her for the first time. I guarantee you will need to pull over because the majesty of her peak in full view will literally stop you in your tracks. I've taken groups there many times and I still get butterflies in my stomach. Sharing the experience with a bunch of like-minded riders takes some beating.

A lot of people don't realise that Mount Everest has two base camps and each one is in a different country. Base Camp South is in Nepal and Base Camp North is in Tibet. You can ride a motorcycle to the base camp in Tibet but the Nepalese side can only be reached by trekking. At this stage, it's worth pointing out that Tibet is an autonomous region of China. Tibet's status has been disputed for many years and continues to be so. However, we stay out of politics and for logistical purposes, you need a Chinese visa to enter Tibet, and you'll need to pass through a Chinese border post.

There are a few options when it comes to which route to take. None of them are easy, that's what makes the journey an adventure, but the most straightforward is to start and finish in the city of Lhasa in Tibet. However, for me, this just doesn't hold a candle to starting and finishing in Nepal. I've ridden all the routes on different kinds of motorcycles over the years and I've ►



PEG-SCRAPING HEAVEN



NEPALESE PRAYER
FLAGS ALONG THE ROUTE



THE RIDE IS LITTERED
WITH STUNNING VIEWS

learned that, in terms of the ultimate motorcycle adventure and an all-out, once-in-a-lifetime experience, starting and finishing in the fabled city of Kathmandu is by far the best.

PREPARATION

Riding to Everest Base Camp requires a huge amount of preparation with a slew of permits and permissions needed that seem never ending. I'll be honest, this process can be long and frustrating. If you ride with a reputable tour company, the bureaucratic hassle will be sorted out for you and you'll be guided through obtaining your Chinese/Tibetan visa.

We use our own fleet of Royal Enfields so we can be certain they've been properly maintained and prepared for the ride ahead. The Enfield is perfect for the job. It's tough enough to handle the rugged terrain, it's easy to repair if there were to be any issues, and it's also a lot of fun to ride.

Riding conditions in Nepal and Tibet are varied and unpredictable as you're travelling in the mountains. You can expect to find well-surfaced tarmac and cement roads, mountain trails, and mud and loose gravel. Of course, riding conditions also vary with the weather. In all my times of motorcycling in Tibet, it has never rained once. There has been the odd cloud and a few raindrops on the visor but nothing worth mentioning. Here's the thing though: Rain at high altitude turns to snow. It's important to be prepared for all weathers as it's possible to experience sunshine, rain, sleet, and snow all in one day.

This should tell you something about the kit you need to take. The essentials are of course a helmet, a warm textile jacket with a removable lining, protective trousers that are hard wearing and breathable, and protective armour. You'll also need gloves and motorcycle boots that go over your ankles, as well as a thermal base layer and waterproofs. You'll also need a hydration backpack, a basic first aid kit, sun cream, sunglasses, and a waterproof bag for all your essential documents. Remembering to bring the correct riding gear with you is very important. You would be shocked to discover how many people turn up unprepared. I've even seen riders turn up with no jackets. Yes, you're reading this correctly.... No jackets!

AND WE'RE OFF

Kathmandu is a hectic and bustling city that I'd recommend everyone visit at least once in their lifetime. On the tours I lead, the first couple of days are taken up with sorting out visa applications at the Chinese Embassy and then a bit of sightseeing. There's lots to see and do and the Nepalese people are so friendly and helpful. There's also no shortage of places to stop off and have the odd beer or two should you fancy.

Riding in Kathmandu isn't for the faint hearted. The population of Nepal is reckoned to be around 29 million people and it usually feels like half of them have decided to hit the roads of the capital city on the same day. Your riding and concentration skills will be pushed to their limits. There are trucks, buses, taxis,



RELAXING AT
EVEREST BASE CAMP



ALTITUDE SICKNESS
CAN BE AN ISSUE AT THESE HEIGHTS



SILKY SMOOTH ROADS
ON THE WAY TO EVEREST



RIDING IN A GANG
IS ALWAYS MORE FUN

motorcycles, the odd cow or two, and pedestrians all headed in different directions at the same time. If the weather's been dry, the roads are dusty. If it has rained, yep, you guessed it, mud and puddles. On our tours, we call the first riding day a warm-up ride. It's a short day of around 50 miles to get people used to the bikes and the riding before stopping just outside Kathmandu in Nagarkot. It may be a short ride but you can't let your guard down for second. If you ride self-supported, I'd recommend not pushing to many miles on your first day.

The ride to the Chinese border is a mixed bag and it's impossible to predict the conditions ahead. This is due to the changeable weather. There are three different routes you can take and none of them are easy. We cover the 80-mile journey to Syabrubesi in about 10 hours on a mix of forest trails, single-track road, and deep valleys. It's an absolutely stunning route but it's also tiring. I'd highly recommend upping your fitness level and preparing for the ride in advance. It'll pay huge dividends.

INTO TIBET

The border crossing is yet another memorable part of the adventure. It's never the same experience twice and patience is the key. Travelling in this region is very different to the western world. Accept the fact that it will take some time, relax, and go with the flow. Mount Everest isn't going anywhere soon. On the road to Everest, we ride at an average 4,000m above sea level and travel over high passes peaking at around 5,200m. The next time

you will be at that altitude will be on your flight home. You'll certainly feel the altitude as the decrease in oxygen affects your performance. Even taking the petrol cap off your bike when refuelling can be an effort.

There is also the risk of suffering from acute mountain sickness which generally affects people at heights above 2,500m. The lack of oxygen can cause a headache, nausea and dizziness, and disrupt sleep, although the symptoms are usually temporary and can be reduced by staying well hydrated with water and by taking Diamox tablets. Altitude affects everyone, including myself and my team when we lead tours. We have a medic travelling with us and he has a constant supply of tablets and oxygen if needed. I find the best way of dealing with it short term while riding is to just pull over and rest for some time.

A STEADY GROOVE

The lack of oxygen also affects the performance of the bike. There's a drop off in horsepower and twisting the throttle even harder makes no difference. On the long days riding over the Tibetan Plateau, I like to settle into a steady groove and just let the engine work. The Himalayan is only 411cc but ridden properly, it's perfect. I like to keep the engine at around a maximum of 4,000rpm on the long climbs and 50-55mph is a good speed. It doesn't sound like much but it's fast enough when you have wild yak wandering where they like. There are no fences and we're actually in their territory. ►

WANT TO RIDE TO EVEREST BASE CAMP?

Looking for your next big adventure? Alex's company Nomadic Knights runs a 13-night guided tour to Everest Base Camp on Royal Enfield Himalayan or Royal Enfield Bullet Trials Works Replica 500 motorcycles. Places are available on the next Rode to Everest tour which leaves on 9 May 2021.

The company will provide your motorcycle, fuel, internal transport, permits, accommodation, breakfast and evening meals, as well as full medical, mechanical, and logistical support throughout the tour.

Alex personally leads every tour, drawing on his extensive local knowledge, alongside a dedicated team of mechanics, medics, and local contacts to ensure you enjoy the ride of a lifetime. Start your adventure at www.nomadicknights.com.



Fuel stations are few and far between so conserving fuel is essential. This is especially true because it is illegal to carry spare petrol in a can or any other type of container in Tibet. We don't do it and can't risk it as we wouldn't be allowed back into the country if we did. This is very inconvenient and gives us a huge challenge but we respect the rules and comply as requested.

We always plan to have a rest day in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet. It's a beautiful place and visiting the Potala Palace has to be one of the highlights of the trip. It's the spiritual home of the Dalai Lama and has five tons of gold within its walls. There's also plenty to do in the evening. We take in a cultural event and mix it with our evening meal. If you like singing and dancing, or you like to laugh at other people singing and dancing, you'll love it. What else would a bunch of bikers do on a Friday night as they hit the town?

The roads in Tibet are in fantastic condition. They are mostly smooth tarmac and there are lots of twisty sections. I love the up-hill climbs when you ride numerous hairpin bends, made all the more enjoyable by the fact there is very little traffic. If you're riding with a mate or just a few other riders, getting into the groove on good roads like these is such great fun. Safety first of course but you're here to enjoy yourself!

THE NIGHT BEFORE BASE CAMP

The night before we ride to base camp is always filled with excitement. It's like Christmas Eve as a child except this isn't make believe. It's common for the riders I take on tour to have booked two years in advances so the excitement of seeing Everest for the first time is certainly justified. The ride to base camp is fabulous and I assure you, you will be stopping constantly to take it all in. You'll climb over the final pass before Mount Everest comes into view and then wow, just wow! Take your time and enjoy the view, you've earned it.

Base Camp is an incredible place and the highest point where we spend the night on the journey at 5,150m. We generally sit around a wood burning and dried yak dung stove watching the sun go down over Mount Everest. We try to arrive around 2pm in the afternoon as this gives everyone plenty of time to marvel at where are, wander around, and take photographs. Those moments are the reason everyone signs up and takes on such a challenging journey.

I'm often asked if I ever get used to being at Base Camp and, honestly, I don't. I've ridden all over India, in Burma, China, Tibet and Nepal. I've covered hundreds of thousands of miles over the years in the Himalayas but it's safe to say that riding to Mount Everest is the pinnacle, if you'll pardon the pun. There's so much more to this ride than I can possibly write in this article, but rest assured, if you're a biker with a sense of adventure, and you like the thought of challenging yourself, then riding to Everest Base Camp is for you. I guarantee you won't regret it. I look forward to seeing you on the road. **ABR**

THE BIKES

Riding in rugged mountain terrain requires a tough bike that can handle anything thrown at it. At Nomadic Knights we use Royal Enfield motorcycles, with the Himalayan proving the most popular choice on the Rode to Everest tour. It has proven ultra reliable and a lot of fun to ride, the handling is spot on, and overall, it really is the perfect bike to ride on an adventure like this. The Himalayan may not be the most powerful motorcycle around but it's ideal for the type of riding we encounter. We replace our fleet every two years and ensure each bike is fully serviced before embarking on a trip.

THE ROOF OF INDIA

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Nomadic Knights
LIVE LIFE. LOVE ADVENTURE™

DESTINATION ANTARCTICA

KENNETH FRIEDMAN travels to Antarctica to fulfil his dream of riding a motorcycle on each of the Earth's seven continents





WHO'S WRITING?

I live in the beach city of Malibu, California, in the USA where I ride my motorcycle and surf daily. I started riding bikes as a teenager but then paused as I pursued a venture capital career and fulfilled commitments to my family. Thirteen years ago, I purchased a motorcycle and I've been riding extensively ever since. I have logged hundreds of thousands of miles in a breadth of terrain, both on and off road, in some of the most remote and beautiful environments in this world. My travels have been through approximately 50 countries and all seven continents. Riding is the ultimate manifestation of freedom and independence for me. I ride predominantly on my own and prefer to embark on two-week to four-week journeys with a minimum of planning, no GPS, no predetermined routes, and I prefer off-road options in nature and to ride through small towns and villages.

M

inutes after the stroke of midnight, my crated BMW F 700 GS and I landed upon a blue ice runway in Antarctica. A Russian Ilyushin cargo aircraft had deposited me on a vast glacier approximately 600 miles from the South Pole. A few hours later, I found myself riding upon the frictionless surface, completing my aspiration to ride upon all seven of the Earth's continents. Others have accomplished this feat, but as far as I know, I'm the first person to have done it by riding a motorcycle on the interior of Antarctica, rather than the more accessible Antarctic Peninsula. It was the culmination of many years and numerous adventure biking excursions. But before I get into that, let me rewind to the beginning.

My introduction to motorcycling began, like so many of us, on a dirt bike as a teenager. My friends and I would ride through the agricultural lands and rolling hills of the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. After graduating from our Schwinn Stingray bicycles, we tasted the speed and freedom of our motorcycles and we liked it. Indian Dunes was our mecca for motocross racing and riding in the sandy desert and rocky expanses. However, as we matured to the ripe old age of 16, our Chevelles, Camaros, Firebirds, and other big block V8-powered vehicles relegated our motorcycles to the back of our garages. Then life, college, career, and family continued to press the biking pause button.

A MIDLIFE CRISIS

Fast forward to the proverbial midlife crisis and the realization of my mortality as I approached the 'mature' age of 50. My antidote of choice was a new Harley-Davidson Softail Deluxe straight off the showroom floor, not exactly the personification of an adventure bike, I know, but stay tuned. Riding the Harley-Davidson helped me experience the freedom that exploring by motorcycle brings, but keeping strictly to asphalt roads within the United States became too restrictive, so off to Italy I went. Tuscany, the Amalfi Coast, and Sicily were just some of the locations that whetted my appetite for adventure, so once back home, I enrolled in an off-road training program to prepare myself for a return to my trail riding roots and to embark upon adventure motorcycle journeys worldwide. The option to explore routes off road, only limited by my riding skill and curiosity, unfurled a vast amount of terrain otherwise not explorable by conventional travel. ►

TRAVELLING THE WORLD

Accordingly, for the last 13 years, I have travelled worldwide by motorcycle, riding and surfing upon six continents. Surfing is another almost daily endeavour and passion of mine. It evokes a sense of freedom and unity with nature similar to riding a motorcycle off road. These adventures gave me an insight into a broad variety of cultures, cuisines, and languages, as well as the splendours of Mother Nature. I experienced the grandeur of the Himalayas of India, observed the wildlife of Africa, I enjoyed the scenic and cultural splendours of Europe, and I had some absolutely extraordinary riding adventures throughout South America.

However, there remained one significant jewel missing from my riding crown. I needed to ride in Antarctica to reach my goal of motorcycling on all seven continents. I was aware that a handful of bikers had achieved this, but to the best of my knowledge, each had ridden on the more accessible peninsula and not upon the icy interior. I discovered someone who had ridden on the interior almost 30 years ago, but I found no evidence to suggest they rode on all seven continents. So, five years ago, I embarked upon my mission.

Antarctica is a unique continent in that it is not a country and contains no native human population. Accordingly, international relations and rules are generally dictated by the Antarctic Treaty and associated agreements. Most activity on Antarctica is comprised of a number of research stations and tourism, and there is a ban on any type of military activity. Tourist visits require a permit, hence my initial challenge.

I canvassed the internet and spoke with any company that had a hint of a connection to providing products or services to Antarctica. I was summarily rebuffed by each. Additionally, I was in contact with the US State Department which exclusively issues private US expedition permits, but I wasn't succeeding on that front either. However, as it seemed I'd exhausted all of my options, I discovered a website for a company that provided logistical and expedition support on the interior of Antarctica. Their website pictured someone riding a fat tyre bicycle on the snow so my hope was reignited. I contacted them about logistics, riding conditions, weather, permitting, motorcycle and crating requirements, and a series of other issues to make the expedition a reality. After approximately two months, an agreement was reached and a period of intense trip planning began.

THE PLAN COMES TOGETHER

Over the next six months, I put all my efforts into solving the logistical, regulatory, and practical solutions that would make my dream a reality. As my only riding surfaces were to be frictionless ice and snow of varying degrees of compaction, researching the optimal tyres and accompanying metal studs was an imperative. Additionally, regulatory requirements meant my motorcycle needed to be certified and placed in a crate constructed with a specific heat-treated wood to mitigate the introduction of non-native organisms to this ecologically sensitive part of the world.

Furthermore, there was the task of ensuring the lithium batteries in my cameras would work in Antarctica's cold temperatures. I devised a system to house lithium battery packs under my polar jacket and run wiring to my GoPro cameras and iPhone. Wind chill factors of -20C to -30C meant I chose traditional multi-layered Antarctic polar gear instead of conventional motorcycle clothing.



EXPLORING
UNION GLACIER



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TO INCREASE TRACTION



KEN AND THE
ILYUSHIN CARGO PLANE



GETTING THE HANG
OF RIDING ON THE ICE

THE BIKE

The motorcycle I rode in Antarctica was a BMW F 700 GS. While not necessarily the optimal bike to ride upon ice and snow, I've ridden GS bikes on the most of my worldwide journeys. They allow me to ride upon virtually all surfaces, including pavement, gravel, mud, sand, and even ice and snow. On the ice and snow, and in the extreme cold, the GS was a reliable partner. The key to riding the GS on the ice and snow was the 400 metal studs that I inserted into the knobby tires. Furthermore, to measurably enhance traction, I lowered the PSI on the tires to three PSI. On the snow, it was critical to transfer my weight to the rear and to allow the front end to float on top of the snow so as to prevent the front tyre from submerging below the surface.

So, armed with adventure tyres inserted with almost 400 metal studs, I set off to Punta Arenas in Chile where my rental bike, a BMW F 700 GS, was waiting. As well as mounting my studded tyres, I adjusted the height of the clutch pedal to accommodate my oversized boots before putting the bike into its wooden crate in preparation for the flight to Antarctica. On the evening of December 6, 2019, the Russian aircraft was cleared for take off and we embarked upon a flight to the spectacular Union Glacier on the interior of Antarctica.

Accompanying me on the plane were a variety of expeditioners seeking unique journeys and adventures. There was a group who planned to climb Mount Vinson as part of an attempt to summit the seven highest peaks on each of the Earth's seven continents. Others would be flown to 89 degrees south to ski the last 60 nautical miles to the South Pole. Three of the passengers would be pursuing their dreams of parachuting onto Antarctica. There was even a group who flew in to run a marathon on Union Glacier. They were all fascinating individuals with adventurous spirits with a desire to dance upon the precipice of life.

A LAND OF SNOW AND ICE

Landing on an ice runway under the midnight sun was a surreal experience, almost like entering a dream. Once on the ground, I made my way to expedition base camp where I would stay in my small multicoloured tent on the snow for almost a week. My adventure would begin the next morning and I spent the night anxiously thinking about the reality of riding upon the snow and ice in such a spectacular and remote location.

The following day, armed with fresh warnings of the likely locations of clandestine crevasses that could terminate my adventure (and me), I took my first ride on the snow. With my tyres initially inflated, or as it turns out overinflated, to 25 PSI, maintaining traction and balance required the deftness of Baryshnikov as the studs were of negligible value. The key to riding upon terrain without traction was to adjust my approach to that of riding upon deep sand, with my weight back, maintaining speed, and allowing the front end to float and dance freely with a loose grip.

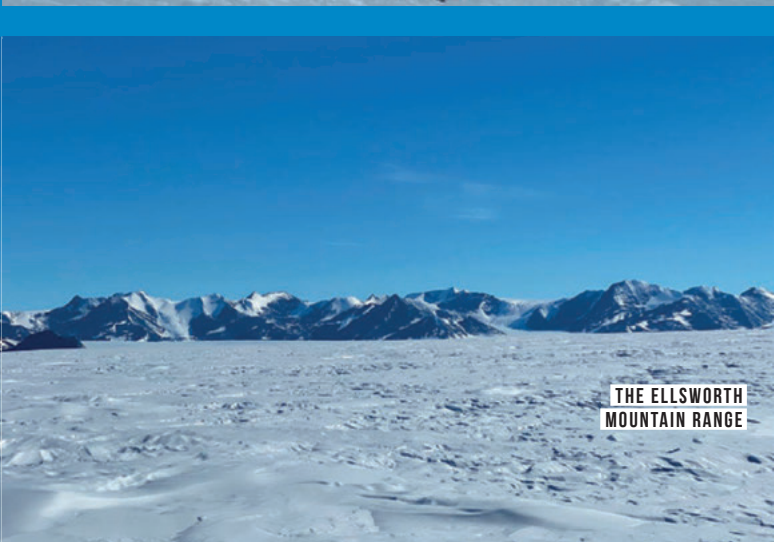
After my initial day of riding on the snow, the next day I approached the luminescent blue ice. It was brushed with a microlayer of melt which was almost impossible to walk on without slipping over, despite the metal treads on my boots. However, as I set off, I found the weight of my GS concentrated onto two small points of contact on the ice yielded a perceptible grip. Despite appearances, the ice was a more amenable riding surface than the snow, especially with less pressure in the tyres which enhanced traction. As my confidence grew, I ventured further across the vast glacier. ►



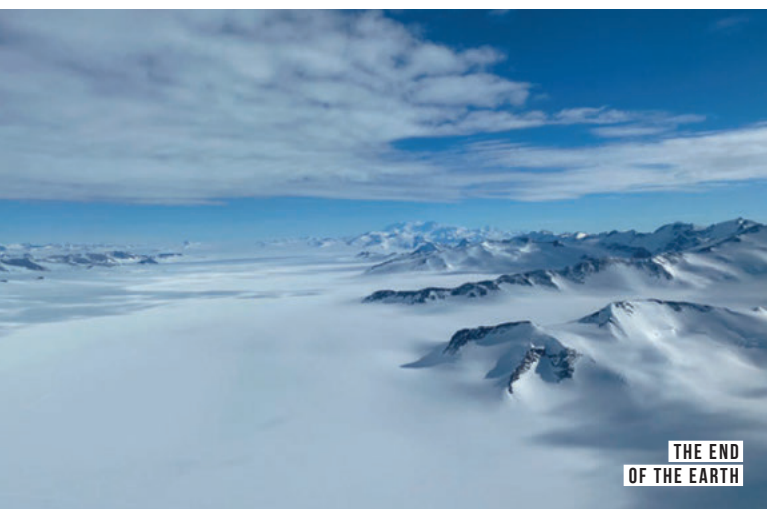
THE ICE WAS BRUSHED
WITH A MICROLAYER OF MELT



HOME SWEET HOME



THE ELLSWORTH
MOUNTAIN RANGE

RIDING CONTINENT
NUMBER SEVENTHE END
OF THE EARTHWHERE DID I
PACK THE SHOVEL?KEN POSES WITH
HIS BMW F 700 GS

EXPLORING THE GLACIER

Over the course of the week I rode around 150 miles and exploring the icy world on the polished surface of the glacier became a daily ritual. All the time, my experiences were framed by a remote landscape of undulating snow, rocky outcrops, and sculpted ice. I was accompanied by the sounds of howling winds and the ever-present sight of intense, azure blue skies, as well as the sculptural formations of the Ellsworth mountain ranges. It was a surreal and extraordinary experience which became indelibly etched into my mind.

However, the impact of riding in Antarctica didn't strike me fully until I completed my riding and sat waiting for the flight back to Chile with my motorcycle tucked away in a crate. It was the end of a five-year journey to ride in Antarctica. Despite the adversity and the naysayers, I'd achieved my goal. It was a humbling experience which left me with a cornucopia of cherished memories and eternal gratitude.

So, what do you do when you've fulfilled such a long-held dream? Well, I've become focused on inspiring others to go beyond their comfort zones, set ambitious and challenging targets, and persevere with tenacity to achieve their goals. Accordingly, I am forming a not-for-profit entity called Dance Upon the Precipice (@DanceUponThePrecipice) to provide a social media hub to connect inspiring individuals with those seeking such inspiration. My goal is to encourage people to cease merely treading water in life and to pursue challenges in any field in recognition of the brevity of our existence and the personal growth that is a result of such adventures. Adventure bikers are uniquely tuned into this and I hope my journeys over seven continents, culminating in riding Antarctica, inspire you to dance upon your own precipice. **ABR**



WANT TO RIDE IN ANTARCTICA?

Due to weather conditions, it is only feasible to ride on the interior of Antarctica during the summer months of December and January. During such time periods, temperatures with wind chill considerations still may range between -20C to -30C. Access to the interior of Antarctica is, weather permitting, upon a Russian Ilyushin cargo plane departing out of Punta Arenas, Chile which lands four-and-a-half hours later upon a spectacular blue ice runway on Union Glacier. Antarctic Logistics and Expeditions (ALE) provides transport services for individuals embarking upon various expeditions and provides the logistical support for the breadth of research stations located on Antarctica out of its base station on Union Glacier.

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HIGHLAND ADVENTURES

With dreams of a European tour in tatters, **Ollie Rooke** travels north to Scotland instead and discovers some of the best riding of his life



WHO'S WRITING?

Before joining *Adventure Bike Rider* as Staff Writer, Ollie Rooke lived and worked in his home city of London. Aged 23, he set off on a grand tour of 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.

If motorcycle magazines featured a lonely-hearts column that matched biker's looking for platonic company on their trips away, I'd be first to post an ad. While I have plenty of mates out of the saddle, none of them have ever shown the faintest interest in two-wheeled travel, which has left me heading off on the majority of my tours solo.

Before you break out the violins, I should clarify that I enjoy solo motorcycle travel. Sure, it can be a little lonely at times, but there's nothing that can match the freedom of marching to the beat of your own drum. I've also found that the most random, entertaining, and often downright bizarre situations come about as a result of my general eagerness to talk to anyone and everyone when I'm abroad. And yet, there's always been just a little bit missing.

As a child, I'd listen transfixed as my dad told stories of touring Europe in his 20s with his mates, and he'd show me photos of Ryka's Cafe at Box Hill, Surrey, heaving to the brim with young, mulleted bikers clad in leather and denim. Sadly, now I've reached my 20s, the buzz has fizzled out, average speed cameras have replaced the crowds that lined the A24, and I find myself regularly planning trips alone. Well, that was until I made a friend.

I'd asked a motorcycle forum for tips on riding around Morocco and amongst the replies I received, Andy's stood out not only because he'd just returned himself, but also because we were of a similar age and had a similar history of tackling European tours alone. After chatting online, we went on a few rides through the Cotswolds together before, on one particularly boring afternoon in lockdown, my phone pinged with a text reading 'I might head up to Scotland for about eight or nine days in September, if you fancy it?'.

My reply back didn't need much thought. I was itching to head off on a motorcycle tour. Sadly, constantly changing travel bans and 14-day quarantines had all but ruled out an overseas trip, and my dream of heading off alone to tackle some of Romania's epic mountain passes had been cancelled with just about everything else in 2020. Scotland was open though and, while it didn't offer the unfamiliarity of Romania, it was well-placed to scratch my two-wheeled travelling itch. Somehow, during a summer when we weren't allowed to leave our homes, I'd made myself a biking mate.

READY FOR ADVENTURE

A month after receiving Andy's text, I found myself sitting in my front room peeping out of the blinds waiting for him to arrive. My Honda Africa Twin Adventure Sports stood decked out with its full complement of aluminum luggage and a fresh pair of Mitas E07 knobbly tyres which had been hastily dispatched by Bike Tyre Store just a few days before. ►

When Andy arrived, we hooked up his helmet with a Sena intercom so we could chat as we rode along and then we set off up north. Immediately, the benefits of the fresh perspective that travelling with someone else can bring were evident. While I'd assumed we'd be doing a lot of motorway miles to head up to Scotland, Andy had instead planned out a route that took us through the Peak District and the Yorkshire Dales. After all, we weren't in a rush so why not treat the UK in the same way we would any other European country on tour? After fewer than five minutes on the road I'd found my way of doing things challenged for the best, perhaps this travelling with mates lark had something going for it after all.

Still, we had to jump on the motorway to clear Birmingham before turning off into the Peak District and away from major roads which we'd successfully avoid for the next two days. My own contribution to our joint plan was a simple one. Since I'd missed out on Romania's Transalpina and Transfăgărășean mountain passes, I was determined to tick off as many of Britain's best roads as we could, and first on the list was Winnats Pass, a favourite of mine in the Peaks and a road Andy hadn't ridden yet.

Miraculously, the popular tourist spot was relatively quiet and we both had some clear air to climb the steep road without battling through puffing cyclists and hatchbacks burning out their clutches. After capturing the obligatory photos from the top, we set off on more quiet roads as we headed to our campsite for the evening. It was my first experience of camping post-lockdown and our Covid-secure nightspot featured more Portaloos than Glastonbury Festival (one for each pitch), although the showers were closed.

However, we remained in high spirits as we headed down to the local pub for a steak and ale pie, a few pints of Guinness, and a chat about the stunning riding we'd encountered. Spending the evening nattering away in a cosy local was a far cry from the lonely evenings that my solo travels often resulted in and it capped off a brilliant first day on tour.

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

The next morning, I woke up to discover blue skies, the promise of another brilliant day in the saddle, and Andy already packing up his tent and motoring through his morning routine. I'm not a morning person but the prospect of delaying a day riding through the Yorkshire Dales in the late summer sun had me packing my kit at double-quick time to leave. Ever the gentleman, Andy didn't hurry me once and instead broke out his stove to boil up a coffee (or two) while I loaded up my bike and generally fuffed about.

The Dales were glorious and, once again, I was grateful that Andy had challenged my plan to skip it all on a motorway blast. The sun was shining, the single-track roads were virtually empty, and we had a plan to eat lunch at the highest pub in the UK, the Tan Hill Inn. But before we could fill our stomachs with some good pub grub there was another corker for us to ride, Buttertubs Pass. We found the stunning road completely devoid of traffic and, if it wasn't for our rumbling bellies, I'm sure we would have turned back and ridden it a couple more times for good measure.

The Tan Hill Inn is a popular spot for bikers and we added our own bikes to the ever-growing collection that had parked outside. It was a reminder that, even if you ride solo, you're never really alone on a motorcycle trip. We were soon chatting to a local Multistrada rider who gave us a detailed set of directions that would take us up and over the border on some of his favourite roads.

Crossing into Scotland, we stopped to stock up on essentials (beer) and crawled along the coast on the lookout for somewhere to pitch up for our first night of wild camping. We located a picturesque spot by a river but it was alongside a designated overnight parking area for camper vans and we weren't entirely sure if we



OLLIE RIDES
THE SPECTACULAR QUIRAING



WINDING ALONG WINNATS PASS



GETTING TO
KNOW THE LOCALS



THE BOYS COULDN'T
RESIST A LONG WAY ROUND POSE



were meant to camp there. Deciding to give it a shot anyway, we unrolled our tents, half expecting an angry local or even the police to arrive and tell us to move on.

With the tents pitched, a local did indeed arrive on a dog walk and quickly revealed himself to be the chairman of the local parish council. Not only did he tell us it was fine for us to camp, but he was genuinely thrilled that a couple of bikers were stopping in his village. A keen biker himself, he chatted away with Andy about the Isle of Man TT as the sun fell. He kindly returned the next morning with coffee in a thermos flask for us both.

STUNNING SKYE

I'd been looking forward to visiting the Isle of Skye for a long time which, as it turned out, would be home to the most spectacular scenery I've seen in the UK. It's also one of the only places I've ridden that can compare to the vast Norwegian fjords. With one eye on the weather forecast, Andy and I reckoned we'd have clear skies until lunchtime, and with neither of us wanting to miss the views, we were up bright and early to get going from a campsite that we'd found in Glen Coe village the previous evening.

On Skye, we followed a section of the TomTom Amazing Britain route that appeared in issue 58 of ABR. If you get the chance, I'd recommend doing the same because it is a sensational ride. A particular highlight were the steep hairpins of the Quiraing and we made sure to admire the view of Skye's dramatic landscape unfolding in front of our eyes as we reached the top. A few miles later we reluctantly made our way across the Skye bridge, leaving the island behind. It was then the first spots of rain started to fall.

It soon turned into a deluge and there was no let off as we climbed the magnificent Bealach na Bà, well, at least I'd been told it was magnificent. With the world cloaked by thick fog and heavy rain, the views were much less impressive than the photos I'd seen, and as we reached the top, we agreed to try again the next day. Reaching the small village of Applecross, we desperately searched in vain for a hostel, bed and breakfast, or even a campsite with a warm bed and shower, before eventually settling on wild camping in the storm. At least there was a pub in the village, located about a 20-minute walk from our camp, that promised warmth and a pint or two. As we set off into the gale, I jokingly shouted to Andy over the wind: "It'd be just our luck if the pub was shut..."

I'll hold my hands up and take full responsibility for jinxing it. On Tuesdays it was closed to non-residents 'due to Covid-19' the sign read (clearly, that bit of scientific advice had passed us by). The closest we got to a beer was watching a lucky resident enjoy one through the window. Feeling downhearted, we trudged back to our sleeping bags and settled in sober for a night of heavy winds and driving rain.

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER

Unzipping my tent the next morning, I took a moment to compose myself as I came face to face with the arse of an enormous stag. "Andy... Andy are you awake?" I whispered as the deer lazily chewed the cud: "There's a massive stag out here doing a shit!" Despite failing to display the eloquence of David Attenborough, the wake-up call was enough to coax Andy out of his tent and we both watched as the deer mooched along without a care in the world.

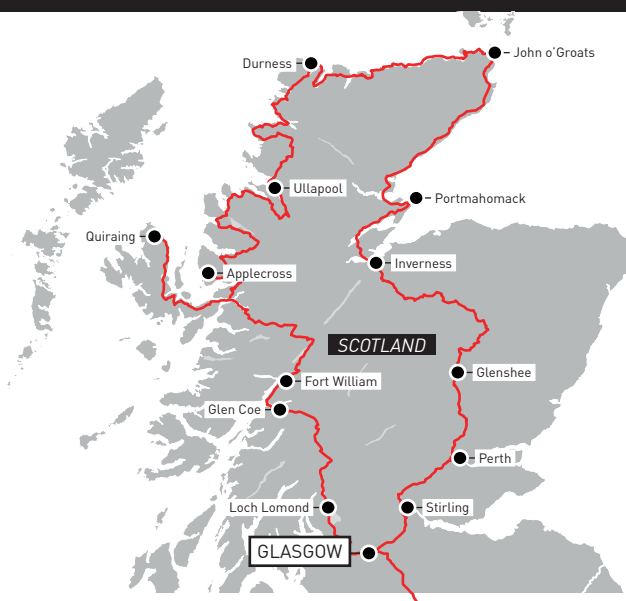
After heading up the Bealach na Bà again for our second attempt at riding the road, we were gutted to find the thick fog hadn't shifted and the views remained obscured. However, a strong wind was blowing through, and as we were about to turn back, I spotted a gap in the clouds. Having previously taken plenty of photos of me riding the Quiraing on the Isle of Skye (having a mate to take photographs is another thing I miss on solo tours), it was now ►

WANT TO RIDE IN SCOTLAND?

While Scotland is located at the end of a motorway blast up the east or west of England, taking this approach would have meant I missed some of the best areas in the UK for riding. However, if time is limited, it may be worth a day or two of mile-munching to ensure you don't have to rush through the stunning riding on offer on the Isle of Skye and in the north west of Scotland.

As fans of camping, we spent most nights in tents, staying in a campsite for three nights and wild camping (which is legal in Scotland) for three. Not only did this help save us a bit of money, it often resulted in the most stunning views as the sun set and it's an experience I'd highly recommend.

All in, we covered 2,000 miles over eight days, and never once had an issue finding fuel. In fact, despite hearing horror stories about the approach to John o'Groats, I found there to be ample fuel stops in the towns and villages for even the smallest of tanks.



THE BIKE

Regular readers of ABR's long-term bike review section will know I wax lyrical about the prowess of the Honda Africa Twin Adventure Sports. My time in Scotland with the big Honda cemented my view that it is a superb long-distance touring bike.

A few weeks before I was due to set off, I found myself notching up more miles than expected and noticed that I was perilously close to the end of my tyre's legal life. After a few frantic calls a couple of days before my departure, up stepped Mitas and the Bike Tyre Store. The next day a set of Mitas E-07 Plus tyres arrived in the office with my name on them. It was a hurried turnaround but well worth it.

The Mitas tyres, and the Africa Twin, coped with everything Scotland could throw at them effortlessly. They ended up being a great combination for a road trip.

Andy's turn to star in the hero shot. I ran up the rocks like a man possessed, determined to get the best vantage point as he headed down the pass.

My frantic run up the hill was worth every breathless step. I was rewarded with a stunning view as the valley below suddenly emerged from the fog. After snapping a few photos, I stumbled back down the rocks for my chance to ride but it was too late, the fog had returned with a vengeance and the wind remained strong. It was so strong in fact that it took a nearby BMW GS clean off its centre stand after its owner had stopped to take a photo. After helping him pick it back up, we admitted defeat and hightailed it off the mountain, setting off in the direction of Ullapool on a collection of stunning coastal roads.

By this point we'd joined the NC500, the popular driving and riding route that loops around the north of Scotland. It's a hell of a road, or to be more accurate, a collection of roads, through the very best of Scotland and we stuck on it as we passed groups of bikers huddled outside the fish and chip shops of Ullapool. Yet again we'd decided to find a wild camping spot and a quick glance at Google Maps suggested Loch Assynt looked like a good place to head for.

A NIGHT UNDER THE STARS

Loch Assynt turned out to be a very good place to wild camp indeed. We found a pitch with a picture-postcard view of Ardvreck Castle, setting up our tents before getting a fire going on the beach as the sun dropped below the horizon. Light pollution is minimal in the north of Scotland as there are few towns and cities around, and with strong winds blowing any clouds away, we were treated to a mind-blowing view of the night sky. With the fire crackling away, its warmth keeping the midges away and a cold beer in hand, we sat and watched shooting stars fly by. It was a special evening, and one made all the better by sharing it with a new mate.

Our final night together would be spent at Andy's aunt's house who'd agreed to put us up on the fringes of Glasgow. However, there was still some brilliant riding to be had. While the Cairngorms National Park may not boast the same towering scenery of western Scotland, it wins when it comes to the quality of its roads. Under some unexpectedly resplendent sunshine, we carved our way through a perfect combination of hairpin turns and sweeping bends, before stopping for a slice of cake alongside a group of fellow bikers at the Glenshee Ski Centre.

Arriving in Glasgow, we experienced the warmth of Scottish hospitality at its fullest. The house was filled with the smell of shepherd's pie, and when it came to dinner time, there was enough for seconds and thirds. It was a merry evening and we finished off more bottles of red wine than I can remember before we hit the hay. The next day we woke up slightly groggy to a slap-up breakfast, before saying our goodbyes and turning towards England and making the long ride home, this time on the motorway.

Back at home, as I sat unpacking my kit, I thought about the differences between the week I'd had with Andy compared to the solo trips I've been on in previous years. While I still think that travelling by myself is the way to go for longer motorcycle journeys, there's no doubt in my mind that good company is better for shorter tours. Andy had turned what would have been a short blast around Scotland on my own into a brilliant adventure. We'd tackled many of Britain's best passes, had a great laugh in the evenings, and worked our way through more beers than a flat full of university students. It's safe to say that, while you don't need friends to ride a motorcycle, it sure does make it more fun. **ABR**

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SURVIVING THE HUNTER'S ROAD

PAUL DONOVAN travels through wild and remote Botswana surviving animal encounters as he journeys to Victoria Falls



GIRAFFES WERE HAPPY
TO POSE FOR THE CAMERA



BEWARE: ELEPHANTS
WILL CHARGE A MOTORCYCLE



4X4 VEHICLE
TRACKS ON THE TRAIL



WHO'S WRITING?

After being made redundant, Oxford-born Paul packed his bags and emigrated to Botswana where he now teaches bushcraft and runs a motorcycle tour company. Prior to emigrating to Botswana, he'd strap a bag to his first bike, a Suzuki AP50, and would go exploring and camping with his friends. He later graduated to a Suzuki GT750 and toured through France and Spain.

Unfortunately, life got in the way and the biking ceased, but it was rekindled when Paul moved to Botswana. He now spends his time exploring remote places and roads less travelled at home and further afield in South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. If a ride has some history to it, as in the case of The Hunter's Road, then all the better. Paul is currently spending his time writing a guidebook on motorcycling in Botswana. You can follow all his adventures on Instagram at @crazybikeadventures.

I have a confession to make. Despite living in Botswana for the past 13 years, I have never been to Victoria Falls, located just over the border in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The nearest I got was several years ago when my wife and I camped at Chobe Safari Lodge in Kasane on our honeymoon. The morn-

ing we were due to ride to the falls, my wife said: "Don't forget your passport?" Ah, my passport. I felt bit of a chump really because, for some reason, it didn't cross my mind that I'd need to bring it. My wife called me more than a few choice names which came to an abrupt halt when I asked: "Where's yours?" Yes, she'd forgotten her passport as well.

To rectify a wrong, I decided a visit to the falls was in order. This time I'd take my bike, my passport, but not the wife. I find life is so much easier when I ride on my own. I can stop when I want and take photos without the continual nagging about why we keep stopping. If I was to take the easy route, I could travel the 400 miles or so by road from my home in Palapye, Botswana, and honk up the A1 to the second city, Francistown. Then I could go up the main road to Nata and onto Kasane, catch the ferry into Zambia, and hey presto, Victoria Falls. But to me that would be boring, uneventful, and go against the grain of having an adventure bike in the first place, particularly as there was a far more enticing alternative route I could use.

Tourists who travel to the town of Kasane often do so via the A33 from Nata. What many of those equipped with the right vehicle don't realise is that just outside Nata is a turning that will take you on 154 miles of glorious (most of the time) off-road track called The Hunter's Road, which will take you into Kasane. It's not actually a road, more a sandy track that runs parallel to the main road. It was established in 1871 by a gentleman by the name of George Westbeeck. Mr Westbeeck was an English ivory



WAITING FOR LUNCH



A WILD COOKOUT



THE KAZUNGULA FERRY

trader (but enough said about that) who became a confidant of many tribal kings in the region. For helping them with disputes between their neighbours, he was granted licences to hunt elephants for their ivory. In order to trade the ivory between Botswana and Zambia, he established a wagon route which became known as Westbeech's Road, or The Hunter's Road.

A NATURAL BOUNDARY

Westbeech actually became a very powerful man in the region, establishing himself as an agent assisting other traders to export their wares through his trading post at the village of Pandamatenga. He could also be regarded as one of the pioneers of tourism in the region. As early as 1876 he was actively advertising hunting expeditions and sight-seeing trips to Victoria Falls in English magazines. What better way than to follow in his footsteps but on a bike. The Hunter's Road now forms a natural boundary between Botswana and Zimbabwe. It is a navigable 10m wide strip of sand bordered on either side by nothing but pristine wilderness. For all intents and purposes, you could be riding through Chobe National Park. The good thing is there are no boundary fences so wildlife can move freely between Zimbabwe and Botswana and you're spoilt for choice at what you see.

I'd been told by people who'd ridden the track before that occasionally it disappears amongst the grass and, if you're not careful, it's easy to stray into Zimbabwe. That was something I definitely didn't want to do. The thought of spending a night

in one of the late Robert Mugabe's less than sumptuous prisons did not sound very enticing. A few months before my ride, an anti-poaching team from Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks strayed into Zimbabwe and there ensued weeks of diplomatic toing and froing to get them back. Apparently, they had been tracking some poachers, but according to Mugabe's henchmen, they were spying. If such high-level intervention was involved in getting government workers back, what chance would a foreigner like me have? I was certain I wasn't going to find out.

ON THE ROAD

I would like to regale you with words of joyous wonderment about how stunning the roads are in Botswana as I rode the 222 miles to Nata. However, endless boring stretches of tar and thoughtless bus, car, and lorry drivers are the same the world over. I thanked my lucky stars when I eventually reached Nata in one piece. I took the opportunity to fill-up my trusty Kawasaki Versys X-300, buy a few supplies, and give my bum a rest. Biking can be jolly painful sometimes. I also had a fill of meat and dump-lings. If this was going to be my last meal before I was munched on by a lion as I lay asleep in my tent, I wanted it to be a hearty one.

Refreshed and raring to go, I headed on up the A33 for 38 miles before reaching the turn-off to The Hunter's Road. As is so often the case, the best things in life need a bit of work to achieve and the entrance was a job to find, but eventually I came upon it. ►

WANT TO RIDE THE HUNTER'S ROAD?

There are no bike hire companies in Botswana, so if you want to ride The Hunter's Road, you will have to ship your own bike over. Fuel is readily available in Nata at the start of the track, and in Kasane, which is the final destination before Victoria Falls. Just about everywhere accepts Visa. Cash machines are everywhere.

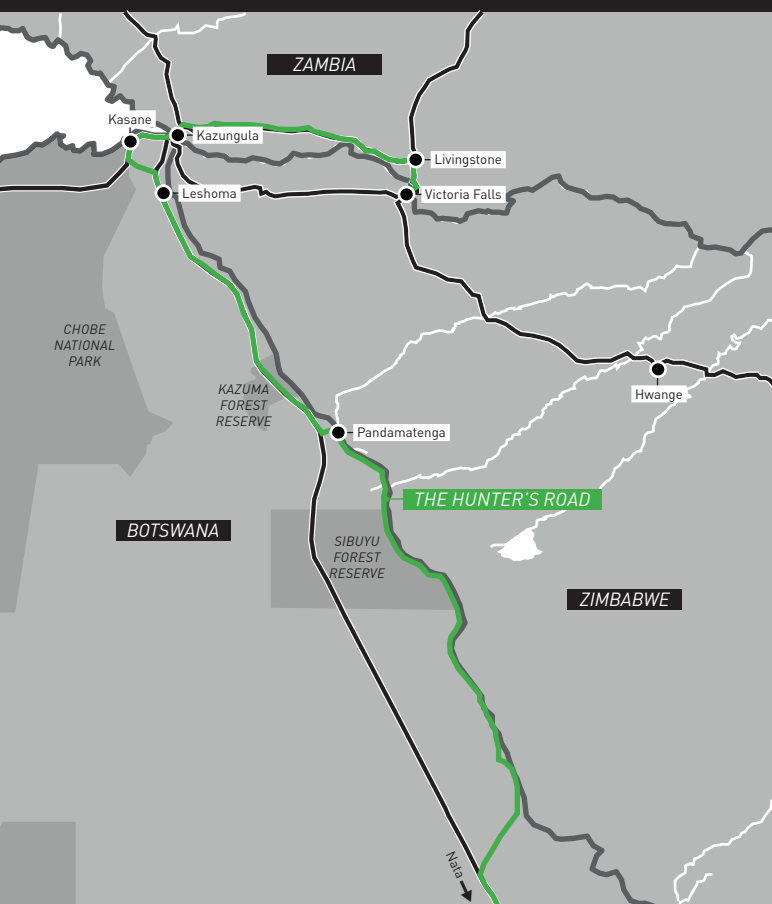
You are not supposed to camp along The Hunter's Road, but as been as it isn't patrolled by anyone, providing you respect the bush, no one will ever know you have been there. Phone reception can be a bit hit and miss so I would recommend a satellite phone or a personal safety device such as a satellite tracker, just in case of an accident.

Be aware, you will be entering an area where there are dangerous animals, which is part of the excitement of the ride. If you are not comfortable with invisible eyes watching you, or camping where animals are around, this is definitely not the ride for you. Unlike many African countries, Botswana is a politically stable country with a low crime rate against foreigners.

THE BIKE

Why did I choose a small adventure bike and not something more substantial? The reason I chose my Kawasaki Versys X-300 was to see if the small adventure bike was up to the task. While the motorcycle is more than capable of covering long distances, after a couple of hours, my backside does begin to suffer a bit. On long tarred stretches of road, it takes a while to get up to speed and I need to work the gears, but once it's up there, it will comfortably sit at 70mph all day in comfort.

The other reason I chose to ride the Versys X-300 is fuel economy. I easily get 250 miles from a tank which meant I didn't have to lug extra fuel around with me. I can't sing the bike's praises enough. It performed faultlessly and took everything in its stride. Obviously, you ride it to its limitations. Its ground clearance means it is not a trials bike. If you do take it off-road, a sump guard would be a good accessory to fit.



The track begins amid typical Botswana bush of Lowveld arid savanna, with open expanses interspersed by thick spreads of acacia trees and rocky outcrops. However, as you push further north, the bareness gradually gives way to vast grassy pans whose names are known only by a few. The riding surface, although sandy, wouldn't challenge even the most inexperienced of riders. The track started off quite wide but then narrowed to little more than the width of a pavement before petering out again into a wide track. A good pair of gloves were called for as I scraped my way through the overhanging bushes which, like every plant here, seems to be covered in vicious thorns.

WILD ENCOUNTERS

My first taste of wildlife came after a couple of miles when I spotted two giraffes nonchalantly munching on the greenery of an acacia tree. It always amazes me how these majestic animals can eat such thorny vegetation. Why do their tongues not resemble pincushions when they poke them out? Unlike many species of animals, giraffes are attention seekers and they just stood there chewing away as I snapped a few pics. About 18 miles further on, the sand became so thick it resembled riding the Dakar Rally and it was taking all my focus to navigate when I spotted a cobra emerge from the bush about 10m in front of me. Thank goodness I wasn't going fast or I would have run it over. Hopping off the bike, I managed to catch it and take a photo or two.

At 2pm, I decided to stop, have a drink, and answer the call of nature which gave me a second snake encounter. As I was about to water the bush, I happened to glance down to see two puff adders lying in the grass at my feet. Now, I'm sure they would have taken great exception to being awoken by a giant weeing on them, as I would have if I were asleep, so I aimed the other way. I walked back to the bike, got the camera, and took a few photos. Even though the vegetation was quite dry, there was plenty more wildlife to be seen. I spotted several vultures circling in the distance, presumably homing in on the leftovers of a hungry lion's dinner. Hopefully, if it were to stumble across me snoozing in my tent tonight, it would be so full up it wouldn't think to give me a second sniff.

As I rounded a bend in the track, a baby elephant suddenly came charging out of the bush in a cloud of dust with its ears flapping and trunk waving. It gave me quite a start I can tell you, but as it was small, I decided to stop and take a photo. It wasn't until I put the camera away did it dawn on me that the baby elephant likely had a mum and dad nearby that wouldn't think twice about charging a Kawasaki X-300. Time to hightail it.

MAKING CAMP

Thoughts of an empty stomach and a good night's sleep began to grow in my mind, so I decided to pitch camp at the next scenic spot. After another hour of riding, I found said spot. When I'm out adventure biking, I bush camp as much as possible and carry minimal kit. As the trip would only take a couple of days, I decided to only take a tent, lightweight sleeping bag, cook set, food, and plenty of mozzie cream of course. As I'd be sleeping on the ground like all the other four-legged and non-legged creatures around me, I decided to give myself a degree of protection. I pitched camp amongst a thicket of bushes and a large mound of boulders. That way, I surmised, should an animal come wandering by, it would smack its head on either a tree, the bike, or a boulder and leave me well alone to sleep peacefully.

Although I spend a great deal of time camping on my own, and the darkness doesn't worry me, your mind can play tricks on you. The noise of a millipede or beetle scurrying across the parched

ground is magnified many hundreds of times by one's own vivid imagination. It is surprising how something so small can sound like an elephant, or worse, a hungry predator honing in on you. However, one of the benefits of being in such a remote area is that the sunsets are almost invariably spectacular, and when the sun has eventually gone to bed, the billions of twinkling stars, not to mention bloody mosquitoes, become your companion. Count the shooting stars and make a wish.

After what seemed like an eternity of drifting in and out of sleep, I eventually fell into the deep land of nod. I awoke the next morning which was a good thing as it showed I was still alive and hadn't been eaten by a large-toothed carnivore. After a cup of hot chocolate, I was on my way again.

THE BIGGEST TEST

Today would determine whether or not I reached Kasane. This was the stretch of The Hunter's Road that was liable to resemble a mud pie. However, the going remained firm and things were looking promising. As I was riding along, I had one of those stupid moments. Standing beneath a tree was a female lion. The stupid-ness came when I stopped right in front of her and got the camera out to take a photo. What the hell was I doing? She could so easily have had me for breakfast in the blink of an eye. Sometimes common sense eludes the best of us in our quest for adventure.

As I moved further north, the scenery changed quite dramatically. It was now much lusher, there was green grass and different kinds of trees. In some areas the ground was slightly muddy but the going was still stress free. It was here I spotted a small herd of buffalo, an awful lot of zebra, a lonesome hyena loafing its way through the grass, and my favourite four-legged animal, wildebeest. To me, wildebeest sum up Africa. It may have only been a small herd, but had I been in the Serengeti, these animals could so easily have been the stragglers of the many hundreds of thousands who undertake their yearly migration to more fruitful feeding grounds.

What also changed was the track. It was now full of deep ruts where 4x4 vehicles had ventured during the winter, churned it all up as they became stuck and left gaping chasms that proved a nightmare to negotiate. However, I managed to navigate the worst of it and all too soon I found myself nearing the end of The Hunter's Road. It was at this point I saw my first full-size elephant of the trip. You can't help but feel vulnerable on a bike when these majestic animals are around, but there's something so special about them. I certainly gave the elephant respect as I had two friends in the UK who were killed in separate incidences while working with them in zoos.

JOURNEY'S END

On reaching Kasane, I had a short nine-mile ride to Kazangula to catch the pontoon ferry from Botswana to Zambia, and then on to Victoria Falls. They are one of the most spectacular borders in the world, as the Zambezi River plummets 108m downwards between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Even before you reach them, they advertise their presence. From several miles away mist fills the air like smoke and colourful rainbows draw themselves across the pale blue sky. As I gazed out across this magnificent embodiment of nature that is Victoria Falls, I wondered if the thoughts going through my mind were the same as those going through Dr David Livingstone's as he stumbled across them in 1855, making him the first European to do so? The end of my trip signified the culmination of an injustice I had been doing myself for a long time by not visiting this magnificent place, after having failed to do so on my honeymoon. I am glad that I did it on a motorcycle and I am even gladder that I travelled here along the The Hunter's Road. **ABR**





KTM

890 ADVENTURE

JULIAN CHALLIS TRAVELS TO GREECE FOR THE WORLD LAUNCH OF KTM'S NEW 890 ADVENTURE

A

s we head out of the trees, the stony track opens up as a spray of rocks fires out behind me. We quickly blast down to the sharp left hairpin, and although there's a temptation to drop in and drift the back round the turn, the view is just too good not to stop.

We're at the head of an enormous valley stretching from the deep green coniferous forests that cover the mountains on either side, right down to the azure waters of the Gulf of Corinth below. Our route follows a wonderfully sinuous path that clings to the steep valley walls like some vast snake twisting its way to the sea. It's hard to imagine better terrain for adventure riding, and sat astride the new KTM 890, it's pretty hard to imagine a better bike to be adventure riding on.

We're in central Greece for the European launch of the 890 Adventure, an event that is in itself something of a milestone in the

train wreck that has been 2020. Few could have predicted that the launch of KTM's 390 Adventure back in early March would have been the last one before the entire motorcycle industry and indeed the world was put on ice. In a year that promised the usual steady flow of new machines from the bike shows to the production lines, there has been a painful and hollow silence.

So, it's perhaps fitting and maybe even predictable that the manufacturer that hosted the last launch in Tenerife should be the first to offer the industry a new model and maybe new hope. KTM is always ahead of the game in terms of product development and innovative technology, moving with the apparent agility and pace of a speed boat compared to the super tanker sloth of the big four Japanese manufacturers. In the time it took Yamaha to finally bring out the Ténéré 700, the Austrian brand could easily have developed, launched and be on to the second generation of one of their orange machines. ►



CONFIDENCE INSPIRING
HANDLING AND GRIP

FIRST LOOK

Our first chance to see the new bike in the flesh comes during an evening presentation at the medieval castle above the launch resort of Nafpaktos. And to be honest it's a surprise on a number of fronts. Firstly, despite the 890 Adventure R and 890 Adventure Rally images and details being released well before the standard bike, the only motorcycle on the podium is the travel-focussed 890 Adventure, it's sportier sexier siblings not even in the country, let alone on the stage.

And secondly, the new bike does not look vastly different from the 790 Adventure launched back in March 2019. OK so the logo on the front panels proclaim, albeit somewhat illegibly, the new capacity, and the white plastics have been replaced by a complete orange ensemble. But as to the overall look of the bike, nothing has changed, so if you thought the 790 was not exactly a looker, then you are unlikely to be persuaded by the 890. The same praying mantis-like headlight and instrument panel juts out from the headstock, the same saddlebag shaped tank embraces the bike from the fuel cap to the floor, and the same two-piece plastic bodywork stretches from the radiator to the rear just like the bike's off-road siblings. What also remains is the user-friendly seat height, the beautifully

balanced frame, and sensible ergonomics of the bike's clear and uncluttered layout. If it's not broke...

Joining the orange bike, although somewhat in the shadows during the evening presentation is a second and arguably more sophisticated and on-trend colour option, a deep brooding grey with just a smattering of orange highlights. It might not be the choice for the KTM aficionados who doubtless sleep in company branded orange PJs, but for attracting new buyers to the Mattighofen way of life, it's perhaps a more palatable option.

UPGRADES AND OPTIONS

The bike I rode in Greece had a few aftermarket options and additions to the stock bike that will roll out of the showroom. The most obvious is the lighter, if perhaps not particularly sexy, Akrapovič end can that delivers a better, if not exactly thunderous, exhaust note. Second up is the bench seat that allows you to move more easily around when riding off road, but if you regularly take a passenger, keep to the two-piece standard option.

On the technology side, the bike had cruise control, the quick shifter option and, as mentioned in the main review, the 'rally' ride mode. KTM now fit the cruise control switch gear as standard, but to use it you need to buy the software. Some might be irritated by this, but this way the upgrade takes far less workshop time and is cheaper than having to fit new switchgear and also buy the software. It's easy to use, works well, and is a great travel addition. I would recommend the upgrade.

Naturally there are far more aftermarket options available from navigation to luggage and adventure clothing. I'm certain your KTM dealer will be happy to help.

POWER PLAY

But if the looks have not exactly changed, what precisely has KTM done other than add another 100cc or so to make the 890 any better than the 790? Well as it turns out, far more than we could ever have imagined or indeed hoped in a relatively short and challenging period of time.

The following morning, as the sun is gently rising above the mountains towards Athens, we're outside the hotel bright and early, a group of journalists more excited than a class

of kids about to go on a school trip. I grab my chance to bag the grey bike before the others, and with the riders briefed, it's time to get riding as we head out of Nafpaktos to the east of the town and away from the coast, towards Kastraki. ►

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As soon as the roads open up and we can pick up the pace, then the evidence of the development team's work becomes immediately apparent. The motor has a whole wad more torque and a considerable power hike, which shoves the bike forward with a positively wonderful surge from the get-go. And that's no surprise when you learn just how much has been done inside the engine cases, which in engineering terms has been given the full 'Trigger's Broom' makeover. Virtually no part of the engine has been left unimproved, KTM responding with their usual speed to feedback from both the adventure bike market and owners of the 790 and incorporating a whole host of changes into the 890.

The new bike is up a full 105bhp compared to the 790 and enjoys 12 more Nm of torque, taking the bike to the magical figure of 100Nm. The effect on the road is just as good as on paper as we turn north and head further inland, following the River Mornos upstream, the motor's soft bark through the aftermarket option Akrapovič end can bouncing of the landscape as we begin to climb. As with the 790, the bike runs the same compact fuel injected, water-cooled, DOHC parallel-twin cylinder motor that was developed alongside the roadgoing 790 Duke, a bike that too has had an upgrade to the 890 platform. But to achieve that additional 90 (not 100 cc), the newly designed pistons are 2mm larger and their stroke is increased by 3mm. KTM has also added a third piston ring and an additional oil jet to keep things cool.

At the top end, and to feed the bigger capacity cylinders, the valves are 1mm bigger and the bike runs a higher compression ratio to increase fuel efficiency, a feat no doubt further assisted by the all new twin 46mm Dell'Orto throttle bodies that now operate independently to respond to each cylinder. This independent and efficient control allows the bike to not only meet stringent Euro 5 regulations but also enables the

motor to tolerate some truly awful low-octane fuel that is a hallmark of petrol in remote locations, while still delivering up to 280 miles on the one 20l tankful. Now that's a proper adventure bike.

With no such fuel concerns anticipated in mainland Greece, we continue to buzz up the mountain roads, the bike's wonderful torque meaning you can be far lazier about gear changes to the six-speed box. OK, so KTM has given us the optional quick shifter so changes are not exactly taxing, but the 890 just plugs away with almost diesel like grunt if you want it too. Much of the bike's new low-end torque can be traced to the new cranks that have an impressive 20% more rotating mass which, when teamed to the newly fettled balance shafts, keep the motor spinning with the determined efficiency of a T2 Terminator.

CONTROL FREAK

As the roads climb higher towards the vast Evinou Reservoir, the hairpins get tighter and the corners more involving, and this is when a further effect of those bigger cranks can be felt. Motorcycle designers have got wise to the not inconsiderable gyroscopic action that a bike's motor can have on overall stability and the 890 uses that to great effect, the bike feeling appreciably more planted and secure than its smaller capacity brother. Yes, the bigger capacity machine is 7kg heavier than the 790, but the new stability makes this all but unnoticeable, the dual-sport oriented Avon Trailrider tyres sticking to the hot Greek tarmac like an unwrapped toffee in your grandad's pocket. The wheels might be in the off-road combination of 18" rear and 21" front but the 890 drops in and flicks right to left with astonishing ease and confidence.

The fact that the tyres are gripping so well is also assisted by the new shock on the 890. While the front Apex forks remain



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EXTRA POWER AND TORQUE



A SUBLIMELY EFFECTIVE OFF-ROADER

untouched, the back is an all-new Apex unit that now has rebound damping adjustment on the bottom of the shock and a preload adjuster turn wheel – almost the same as the Ténéré then. And with roads like this it's a welcome upgrade as the constantly variable tarmac is interspersed with rocks, gravel, sand and cow muck in worryingly frequent intervals.

The source of the increasing volumes of muck is soon evident as we descend a series of steep hairpins to be confronted by a whole herd of cows chilling out in the road, their bells gently dinging as they wander aimlessly across the tarmac. It's a good job the 890 has the same uber-powerful, radially mounted, four-piston calliper brakes as the 790 to bring it all to a halt, a process made all the more effective by the uprated pads and master cylinder. The rear pads now have heat shields fitted to aid cooling too, a fact that will be appreciated if, like me, you like to drag the rear brake a bit.

Following a brief stop for some drone photographs and filming, it's a short blast to our lunch location at the appropriately named Panorama Café high up in the mountains, where the views are simply spectacular. After enjoying a suitable Hellenic feast of pork souvlaki, lamb kebabs, tzatziki and wonderfully fresh Greek feta salads washed down with strong coffee, I take a few moments to scroll through the options displayed on the 890's relatively small but refreshingly

clear and concise TFT screen prior to setting out for the afternoon's ride. Control is through a simple four button arrangements on the left bar, and from here you can change everything from the display theme to the traction control. There are three rider modes as standard, 'road', 'rain' and 'off road', with the more hardcore 'rally' option available as an optional upgrade.

You can also change the ABS between road and off-road and vary traction control as you ride. The new 890 has been fitted with the latest upgrade to the impressive Bosch electronic control systems and now monitors six dimensions of movement of the bike in order to optimise the cornering ABS, the traction control, and the throttle response. If it all sounds too complicated don't worry, all this goes on without you having to lift a finger, but if you do lose traction while braking into a fast corner, the software will have everything under control faster than your brain, and on roads like these that's comforting to know.

ROUGH STUFF

Suitably refreshed, we head away from the café and after half a mile we finally leave the tarmac and cut right onto the first of a series of truly wonderful forest trails that will fill the afternoon. I stop to add a tad more preload in the shock, set the ABS to off-road which disables the rear and all but negates the front, and click into off-road mode. I'm away to my happy place ►

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £11,949
- ✓ **ENGINE** 2 cylinders, 4 stroke, DOHC Parallel twin
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 889 cc
- ✓ **GEARBOX** Six speed
- ✓ **POWER** 105 bhp @ 8,000 rpm
- ✓ **TORQUE** 100 Nm @ 6,500 rpm
- ✓ **SUSPENSION** Front; WP APEX 43. Rear; WP APEX - Monoshock
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front; Four-piston radial fixed calliper, brake disc. Rear; 2 piston floating caliper
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 196kg (dry)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 20l
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 850mm
- ✓ **GROUND CLEARANCE** 233mm

within seconds. Despite the standard 890 Adventure being the more road-based option compared to the Adventure R or Rally, the way it handles on the rough stuff is just wonderful and every bit as good as the 790, and indeed better again. The low centre of gravity and the new stability of that heavier crank keeps things totally planted at all times, and that punchy engine powers you along the trails in a truly wonderful blur.

Our route takes us along classic forest trails just like you'd find in France, Italy, Spain, or indeed Wales and the 890 is bashing through the terrain like a boss. At the front, the Apex forks will cope with everything from rock steps to big holes without a murmur and the new rear shock is just as competent at keeping the rear wheel in check. I love it.

And those brakes that were so impressive on the blacktop are just as good on the trails, combining both delicate control and anchor-like stopping power if required. The uprated and redesigned clutch is predictably light, and the work done to ensure the gear changes are both smoother and more positive makes spirited progress through the scenery a positive joy, with or without the optional quick shifter. OK, if you ride on the pegs a lot as I do, you may find the aluminium tapered bars a little on the low side, but in fairness there are six different positions for them with over 30mm of movement before you have to reach for the Renthal's catalogue. I just lean forward a bit and get on with enjoying the ride.

As we stop for a breather after half an hour or so, I swap to 'rally' mode, and then I've got options to vary the throttle response from simple 'off-road' to fully on Toby Price 'rally' mode. Accepting that choosing this option on the side of a mountain with a startlingly large drop off on every corner is perhaps suicidal, I elect to leave that for another day. But in either mode you can adjust the traction control allowing you to select just how much the back wheel will break out, the settings from 1 – 9 selectable as you ride with the toggle switches. This proves to make the next hour or so a ridiculously enjoyable as I test just how far I can push my limits before backing off.

Considering the dual sport nature of the Avon tyres, they cope amazingly well with such tomfoolery on the rocky trails, finding more grip than seems possible with such an unaggressive looking tread pattern. Whether I'd be quite so effusive or enthusiastic on a wet day is doubtful. But that's of no matter as the rest of the afternoon passes in a delicious wave of full on adventure trail riding, pushing the 890 as far as I dare and being rewarded with nothing but confidence inspiring handling and grin inspiring performance. When we eventually drop down and return to the tarmac and back to the hotel, I would gladly have turned around and headed back into the mountains for hours more of the same.

CLASS ACT

So has the new 890 earned its place in the truly impressive stable of KTM adventure bikes. Is it a worthy successor to the original 620 or the Dakar winning 950? Can it stand head and shoulders with the class-busting 1190 or the world beating 1290? Is it a genuine improvement on the 790?

The answer is a resounding yes on all counts. The 890 might not look that much different from the 790 that ABR loved just 18 months ago, but the combined effect of the raft of subtle yet considered improvements, refinements, and upgrades takes KTM's middleweight adventure bike to the next level and beyond anything else in its class. Whether your adventures take you around the block, around your country, or around the world then the 890 is up to the challenge. **ABR**



AS A COMMUTER

Choosing a full-on adventure bike for a daily dash to the office is a curious decision, and with so many of us now working from home, maybe an unnecessary consideration. But if you do want the KTM to perform the more mundane roles, then it will do so with ease. It's low, long, and agile enough to cut through the traffic, and has plenty of punch to blast along dual carriageways when given the chance, all while you dream of adventures in faraway places.

AS A WEEKEND TOURER

Few bikes will fit the bill better than the 890 Adventure for weekend touring. Load up the luggage, set the SatNav to somewhere exciting, and head off straight after work on Friday. Just try to resist the urge to keep going way past Monday morning. For the soundtrack, we're choosing some chilled tunes for such a chilled bike, so it's the appropriately named Kingdoms in Colour album from Maribou State on the headphones. Perfect.

AS AN OFF ROADER

From the manufacturer that has 'Ready to Race' as a core value, mission statement, and strap line, the 890 Adventure has off-roading written throughout its DNA. This bike is sublimely effective and additively enjoyable as an off roader. You will attempt far more on this bike than you think possible, and the bike will emerge unruffled and ready for more every time. Get it dirty.

AS A CONTINENTAL ROAD TOURER

As you can probably guess, the 890 is in its element with big journeys, thanks to the massive tank range, great luggage carrying capacity and near perfect ergonomics. Even the seat is all day comfortable, which if you've experienced the upholstered planks fitted to KTM enduro bikes, is a revelation. The only thing you need to decide is how far to go and for how long. The 890 is up for the challenge.

AS AN RTW OVERLANDER

Riders are already using the 790 as a globe-trotting machine, and there's no reason to think that the 890 won't have as many fans. Like a trusty camel, it can go massive distances without a drink, it can tolerate poor quality fuel, and has a strong off-road oriented frame to cope with the punishment of around-the-world travel. KTM has called it 'the most off-road capable travel bike' and they are not wrong. So, what are you waiting for?

AS A PILLION CARRIER

The 890 will look after your passenger almost as well as you, with a raised and separate pillion seat, sensibly mounted pegs, and accessible grab rails. OK, so off the road they are not going to be quite so happy back there, so keep to the tarmac, whack on the tunes and head for the hills.

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HUSQVARNA

701 ENDURO LR

JAMES OXLEY IS HANDED THE KEYS TO THE NEW FOR 2020 HUSQVARNA 701 ENDURO LR AND DISCOVERS WHAT COULD BE THE ULTIMATE OFF-ROAD FOCUSED ADVENTURE BIKE

“Bloody hell, I never realised you were so good at riding off road,” my ABR colleague Ollie bellowed at me over the noise of our motorcycle engines.

“Neither did I mate,” I replied. “Neither did I.”

It was a beautiful late summer evening so, after switching off our office computers at the stroke of 5:30pm, Ollie and I both jumped onto our bikes and made a beeline for the nearest green lanes. It’s not unusual for us to ride a lane or two after work but tonight was special. I’d recently taken delivery of a Husqvarna 701 Enduro LR and I was itching to see what it could do on the trails.

Boy, I was in for a treat. The big Husky danced over the dirt and rock with an effortless grace I’ve rarely experienced. Despite the fact the lanes we rode were on the ‘lighter’ end of the dirt riding spectrum, it was immediately clear this was a seriously capable machine. Muddy ruts were dispensed with ease, a tight technical section was mastered assuredly, and the general lumps and bumps of the trail were dispatched at a faster pace than I’d ever felt comfortable travelling on them before.

Which brings me to Ollie’s generous proclamation about my riding skill. While I thoroughly enjoy turning off the blacktop and indulging in some trail riding, I’m the first to admit my enthusiasm often exceeds my skill. True, I’ll happily roll my wheels across any terrain I come across, but this will usually be at a steady pace to make progress rather any attempt to dazzle my mates with daring deeds of speed or flair.

That all changed when I swung my leg over the 701 Enduro LR. I was like Popeye after eating a can of spinach. The bike is so incredibly confidence inspiring it was like I’d been endowed

with super enduro powers. I felt as if I could conquer the world.

It was an apt feeling because this is the LR, or Long Range, version of the Husqvarna’s popular 701 Enduro bike, and conquering vast swathes of the globe is exactly what it’s been designed to do. Like the standard model, the LR has a 13l fuel tank at the rear but it also boasts an additional 12l tank at the front, taking the overall fuel capacity to a whopping 25l, which is huge for an enduro bike.

This gives the bike a range of around 300 miles, putting it in the same league as big adventure bikes like the Honda Africa Twin Adventure Sports or BMW’s R 1250 GS Adventure in terms of miles between fill-ups.

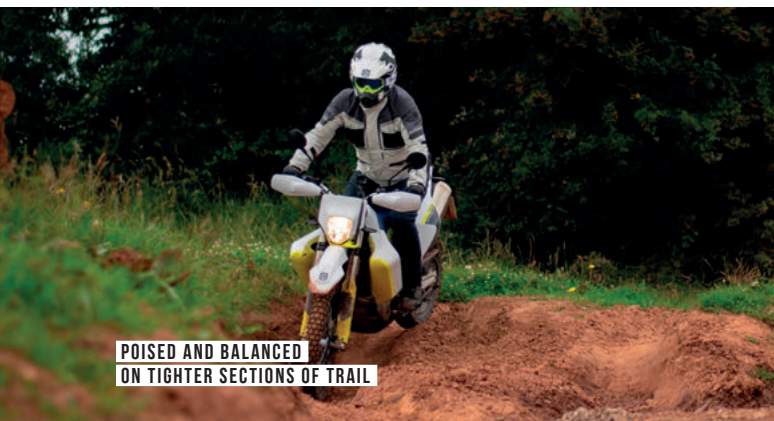
But, why should we care about how the 701 Enduro LR stacks up against road-biased adventure motorcycles? Surely, this is an enduro bike we’re talking about, right? Well, yes and no, and here’s why we should care. For those of us who want a large-capacity trail bike to enjoy exploring the green lanes of the UK on, the 13l fuel tank on the standard 701 Enduro is going to be perfectly adequate for our needs. You also won’t have to carry around the extra weight of that additional fuel tank and associated petrol (9kg according to Husqvarna).

With this in mind, if you’re considering spending your hard-earned cash on the LR model, there’s a good chance you’ve got a long-distance journey planned. Most likely, you want to ride a mix of roads and trails, perhaps across a country, continent, or even around the world. It’s at this point the 701 Enduro LR starts muscling in on territory traditionally held by adventure bikes with their excellent road-riding credentials and off-road prowess.

So, is the 701 Enduro LR a viable purchase for an adventure biker? To answer this question, I first needed to take this oversized ►



**A COMFORTABLE
STANDING POSITION**



**POISED AND BALANCED
ON TIGHTER SECTIONS OF TRAIL**



**JAMES IS ABOUT
TO GET SOGGY JEANS**

trail bike on a road trip to see how it fared on a long journey. And so, one Friday evening, I strapped a bag to the back of the Husky and set off on my weekly commute from the ABR offices in the Midlands to my home in the far South West of England. Ahead of me lay 210 miles of motorway with around 40 miles of twisting A-roads at either end, all of which would need to be re-ridden 48 hours later in order to be back to work on Monday morning.

I left the office a little later than I would have liked as I struggled to strap my dry bag down securely without the presence of grab rails or any other tie points. I managed to loop by straps around the bodywork, but if I was to keep the bike, I'd invest in Husqvarna's luggage options or delve into the thriving aftermarket dedicated to making your 701 Enduro LR travel ready. Once on the road, the upright seating position proved comfortable and provided a commanding view of the road ahead. The bend in my legs wasn't particularly acute and the reach to the handlebars was natural and didn't involve any uncomfortable stretching.

Despite being 6' tall, I had no chance in hell of flatfooting while sat on the towering 925mm seat. There's no mistaking the 701 Enduro LR is a tall bike and unless you possess the inside leg of a Harlem Globetrotter, you're going to be sliding your bum sideways to put your foot down when you roll to a stop. To be honest, this is to be expected on a big trail bike and the benefit of that tall seat is a healthy 270mm worth of ground clearance which reduces the chances of you bottoming out on the trails significantly.

BARE ESSENTIALS

Usually, at this early stage of a bike test, I'll spend a while toggling through rider modes, adjusting the screen, and generally fiddling around with anything and everything on hand to get a feel for the motorcycle. This didn't take long on the Husky because, in terms of creature comforts, you don't get a lot. There is no screen, no heated grips, no cruise control, and no TFT dash.

However, I loved the enduro-style hand grips, which reminded me of the BMX bike I had as a child, and while the basic LCD display was one of the smallest I've seen on a motorcycle, it managed to convey its information clearly and concisely. To be honest, I'm happy to forgive the 701 Enduro LR for its lack of extras, it is an enduro bike after all, but one glaring omission on a bike equipped designed to travel long-distances was a lack of a fuel gauge. All you trail-riding purists out there can call me a big adventure biking sissy if you want, but range anxiety is bad enough on the M5 motorway, let alone in the more remote parts of the world where this bike will no doubt be put to good use.

Talking of fuel, the petrol tanks on the 701 Enduro LR are two separate entities with individual pumps and they need to be filled separately. There is a small switch on the handlebar to toggle between the two. A warning light appears on the dash when the rear tank is running low, although I travelled a least 20 miles accompanied by its orange glow before I filled up and I could still hear the sound of petrol sloshing around in the tank. Unfortunately, no fuel light appeared when I ran out of fuel in the front tank, which led to a few seconds of stuttering and surges in the fast lane of the motorway before I flicked the switch.

Another switch located on the handlebar toggles between two rider modes which changes the characteristics of the engine's power delivery. The first mode is more road-focused and provides a livelier throttle response, as well as engaging cornering sensitive traction control and limiting rear wheel slip. It also limits your ability to pull wheelies which is a good or a bad thing depending on your view of wheelies. The second mode has been designed with off-road riding in mind. The throttle response is neutered and off-road traction control is engaged which allows for more wheel slip and makes it easier to lift the front wheel over logs, rocks, and any other obstacles on the trails. You also have the option of turning the traction control off completely.



TIME TO OPEN
UP THE THROTTLE



MUDDY RUTS
WERE A BLAST



SHE WON'T STAY
CLEAN FOR LONG



A CLEAR AND
CONCISE DASH

RHYTHMIC THUMP

After fully familiarising myself with the bike, I made my way onto the motorway on my Friday night commute and settled into the ride accompanied by the rhythmic thump of the single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, 74bhp engine. Being a single, it doesn't feel smooth or refined and it certainly produces plenty of vibration through the handlebars and foot pegs. However, twist open the throttle and the torquey burst of acceleration that follows was violent enough to get a big shot of adrenaline pumping through my veins. I admit to frantically squeezing my legs together once or twice as my arse threatened to slide backwards along the bench seat.

At motorway speeds, the bike felt impressively stable cruising at 70mph with enough power in reserve for overtakes in the fast lane. The lack of a screen was causing me problems though. It was fine up to around 55–60mph, but at faster speeds I found myself clinging on to the bike as the wind attempted to shove me backwards. It would also have been nice to have some heated grips to turn on as the temperature dipped over Dartmoor.

I was, however, impressed by the level of comfort the seat offered which, by adventure bike standards, looks like it possesses all the long-distance comfort of a wooden picnic bench. Yes, it's flat and narrow, but having tested my backside on plenty of motorcycle seats over long distances, I've come to the conclusion that

the most comfortable ones are those that give me the freedom to move around and mix up the pressure points on my rear. This also helps reduce fatigue throughout the rest of my body. So, while the

701 Enduro LR's seat isn't the most comfortable I've used, it certainly isn't the worst.

By the end of the 250-mile journey (without stopping for fuel), I admit to feeling pretty knackered and definitely more so than I would have been riding my KTM 790 Adventure long-term along the same route, although I'll put much of that tiredness down to a lack of wind protection. Despite this, for a bike that wasn't designed to eat up motorway miles, it did a damn good job.

The following morning, I awoke early and jumped back onto the Husky to take it for blast on a series of twisty country roads and along a selection of green lanes in Cornwall. Despite its 21-inch front wheel, 250mm of suspension travel front and back, and the Continental TKC80 knobblies it was sporting, the 701 Enduro LR proved great fun in the twisties. The bike is superbly balanced and the handling is lively and nimble enough to make darting into corners and accelerating out of turns an immensely enjoyable experience. For a dirt bike it's brilliant, and compared to plenty of road bikes, it more than holds its

own in the thrills departments.

However, it's when you venture onto the trails that the 701 Enduro LR truly comes alive. I'd say the KTM 790 Adventure R ►

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £10,699
- ✓ **ENGINE** Single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, four-stroke engine
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 693cc
- ✓ **GEARBOX** Six speed
- ✓ **POWER** 74bhp @ 8,000rpm
- ✓ **TORQUE** 73.5Nm @ 6,500rpm
- ✓ **SUSPENSION** Front; WP XPLOR-USD, 250mm travel. Rear; WP XPLOR with Pro-Lever linkage, 250mm travel
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front; Single disc, Brembo twin-piston floating calliper. Rear; Single disc, Brembo single-piston floating calliper
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 155kg (dry)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 25l
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 925mm
- ✓ **SGROUND CLEARANCE** 270mm

is the most capable adventure bike I've ridden off road, but the Husky is a class above. I whizzed up tricky rocky inclines that I usually take extra time and care to navigate, sandy and muddy sections were dispensed with ease, and I found myself attacking the lanes in a way I would never usually do on an adventure bike. The Husky felt light, poised, and perfectly balanced as the excellent WP suspension soaked up every rock, bump, and rut I rolled the 21" front, and 18" rear, spoked wheels over. And, that torquey, single-cylinder engine felt as though it would happily chug me up a mountainside if I asked it too, although sadly there wasn't one nearby to test out this theory.

The standing position is, as you would expect, extremely comfortable, pitching me far enough forward to put weight over the front wheel for increased grip but without putting too much pressure on my arms. The bike's steel trellis frame, wheels, and fork helped channel plenty of feedback from the trail through the pegs and the handlebars, and the Brembo brakes front and rear were powerful enough for one-finger braking with confidence. This was especially handy because it's very easy to get carried away while riding the Husky. There's so much power available and the bike is so confidence inspiring that it made me feel like I was a far better rider than I am. This was fine 99% of the time, but once or twice I found myself consciously dialling down the speed after getting carried away.

Helping me feel like Cornwall's answer to Chris Birch was an engine management system linked to the bike's throttle valve and off-road traction control. It's a clever system that constantly monitors the speed of the rear wheel and reacts in milliseconds if it thinks you're heading for trouble. You can turn off the traction control completely, but I found the settings in rider mode two weren't too intrusive and still allowed for plenty of fun.

CONCLUSION

You can probably tell by now I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the Husqvarna 701 Enduro LR, from that first ride after work with Ollie, to exploring the country roads and green lanes of Cornwall. If you already ride smaller and lighter trail bikes, the Husky may feel too heavy and powerful for your needs but for me, coming from a background of riding big adventure motorcycles, it was a revelation on the trails. The bike enabled me to push myself harder and faster than ever before and it instilled a confidence and belief in my riding that took it to new heights. And, despite the fact the Husky wasn't designed for motorway commutes, it made a decent job of mine, although the vibrations from the big single did cause a fair bit of fatigue.

So, would I contemplate chopping in my adventure bike for a 701 Enduro LR any time soon? The answer is a reluctant no. It's simply not refined and comfortable enough to take on the long-distance road tours I regularly ride, and I can still see the terror in my wife's eyes at the thought of covering any distance as a pillion rider on that bench seat.

However, the 701 Enduro shines as a bike that will take you relatively long distances by road before eating up the trails you've travelled all that way to ride, with no need to carry your motorcycle in a van or trailer. It's also the bike I'd choose if I was heading off to Europe for a few weeks or months to tackle stretches of the Trans Euro Trail.

In fact, with a few additions like a screen, a luggage rack, and my favourite creature comfort, heated grips, you could turn this 'travel enduro' into the most off-road capable adventure bike around. It's perfect for a trip around the world along the path less trodden. What an adventure that would be. **ABR**



AS A COMMUTER

The Husky would make a competent city commuter to filter through traffic on thanks to its upright seating position, commanding view of the road ahead, and plush suspension to soak up potholes and hop over kerbstones. However, the 925mm seat height would make paddling around tight spots with your feet down difficult for all but the tallest of riders.



AS AN OFF-ROADER

The 701 Enduro LR is a sensational off-road machine that will take you anywhere you want to go. While it's certainly not the smallest or lightest trail bike around, if you're coming from an adventure biking background, it will prove a revelation and help take your riding to the next level.



AS A WEEKEND TOURER

If your weekend touring involves tying a dry bag to your bike and exploring the UK's network of green lanes for a couple of days, then the 701 Enduro LR would be a superb companion. If you spend more time on the road than off it, and a pillion is regular feature of your weekend jaunts, I'd look elsewhere.



AS A CONTINENTAL ROAD TOURER

Continental road touring usually suggests travelling long distances at motorway speeds, and in this scenario, there are a lot of bikes I'd choose over the Husky. However, when I did take it on a long motorway journey it proved competent at the task, although vibration from the big single did cause a fair amount of fatigue.



AS AN RTW OVERLANDER

I can't think of anything more I'd like to do than disappear off around the world on the 701 Enduro LR. The additional fuel tank will save you from fuel anxiety even in the most remote parts of the globe, and you'll be safe in the knowledge you're on a machine that can tackle almost any terrain you come across. Just be sure to add a screen and luggage rack before you leave.



AS A PILLION CARRIER

How do I say this politely? Hell no! The Husky is good at some things and sensational at others, but keeping your better half happy and comfortable on the pillion perch is not one of them.



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INDIAN FTR RALLY

JAMES OXLEY ATTEMPTS TO TAME THE BRUTAL POWER OF INDIAN'S FTR RALLY
ON AND OFF ROAD

N

estled in a garage in a sleepy corner of Cornwall is a secret I've been keeping from the adventure biking world. Behind a set of wooden doors, cosseted under a collection of dust blankets, sits a gleaming Triumph Bonneville: my Triumph Bonneville.

I know it's not an adventure motorcycle, nor a touring or a trail bike, but I love her all the same. The seat has been removed and the battery is linked up to a trickle charger to ensure it doesn't run down in the weeks and sometimes months she stands idle. And, when she does emerge from her cosy home, I can guarantee you I spend more time fettling, cleaning, polishing, and lovingly gazing at the bike than I do riding it.

In short, put me next to that gorgeous collaboration of classic design, paint, and chrome, and all of my off-road,

long-distance, year-round adventure biking aspirations gently fade away. I become a Sunday rider wearing a fetching leather jacket, jeans, and ankle boots, happy to cruise lazily along the black top in the sunshine, while looking good and feeling even better.

Don't get me wrong, my first love is adventure biking and I can be found more often than not merrily employing cruise control, heated grips, semi-active suspension, and various rider modes with a Sat Nav pointing me forward. But there's a visceral feeling to be had riding a bike as simple as the Bonneville that isn't replicated on more sophisticated machines. I somehow feel more connected to the road. So, on those rare days when I've got nothing to do and nowhere to be, when my phone is switched off and I've got a primal itch that only the sound of the twin chromed exhausts from my 'second bike' can itch, I open up those garage doors in Cornwall. ►

CAPABLE ON
LIGHT TRAILSAN AWKWARD
STANDING POSITIONPART CRUISER,
PART NAKED BIKE

SECOND BIKE JOY

So, when the idea of road testing the Indian FTR Rally was first mooted, any scepticism I may have had about reviewing a retro-looking motorcycle in the pages of ABR, that isn't an adventure bike, a touring bike, or a trail bike was fleeting. I know all too well the joy of owning and riding a second bike that's very different from my 'first' and I'm pretty certain that, for the majority of ABR readers, this is what the FTR Rally could represent.

It isn't a motorcycle you'd bolt metal luggage onto and cross France in a day or two on, your better half isn't going to appreciate sitting in the less than luxurious pillion position for days or weeks on tour, or even on a Sunday afternoon, and I don't reckon you're going to want to tackle the Strata Florida on a bike that looks this good and costs £12,149. However, on those days when your diary is free, you've got no commitments, and all you've got to think about is the engine between your legs and the road ahead, the Indian FTR Rally is an absolute treat.

The Rally is the 'off-road' version of Indian's standard FTR 1200, a motorcycle the manufacturer describes as a flat tracker for the street. If you haven't come across this predominantly American past time, flat tracking dates back to the early 20th century and involves racing motorcycles around an oval dirt track at speed with all the slides, crashes, and high-speed action you can imagine. It looks like brilliant fun. In making the FTR 1200, Indian drew inspiration from its racing heritage, and in particular the championship winning Scout FTR750, to create a machine with flat tracker style for the road.

It proved a winning formula because, if good looks could kill, the FTR 1200 models would be deadly. From the lines of the distinctive fuel tank that flow into the neatly-stitched leather saddle, to the curves of the twin exhaust and the simplicity of the single sided swing arm, this is one damn good-looking machine that manages to be both rugged and beautiful in equal measure.

It's the young Marlon Brando of motorcycles, oozing a disaffected cool which you can't help but feel rubbing off on you when you ride it along the road.

To differentiate the FTR Rally from the standard model, it has been given knobbly Pirelli Scorpion Rally STR tyres, a small wind deflector, a taller seat (although no more ground clearance), handle bars that are 2" higher than the standard bike, and a subtly attractive titanium grey colour scheme paired with a not-so-subtle Indian logo.

THE WILD ONE

But rugged good looks and rich heritage aside, what's it like to ride? Well, to milk the Marlon Brando analogy further, it's a wild one. In fact, the FTR Rally is a brawling beast of a machine that's as charismatic yet rough around the edges as Johnny Strabler in the Black Rebels Motorcycle Club. And rough around the edges it certainly is. Fire up the 1,203cc, 123bhp, liquid-cooled V-twin engine and it barks into life before settling into a primal rumble.

Unusually, in this day and age of fuel injection and engine management systems, the FTR Rally needs a minute or two to warm up or the fuelling struggles and the throttle response becomes jerky and erratic. The fact it never stalled on me really is damning with faint praise a bike that will set you back more than £12,000. However, in my mindset as a 'second bike' owner, I rather came to enjoy the ritual of standing and admiring the Indian as it awakened, that was until it rained or I was running late for work. What I didn't grow to enjoy was trying to operate the steering lock which was frustratingly fiddly thanks to an ignition keyhole being partially obscured by the analogue speedometer.

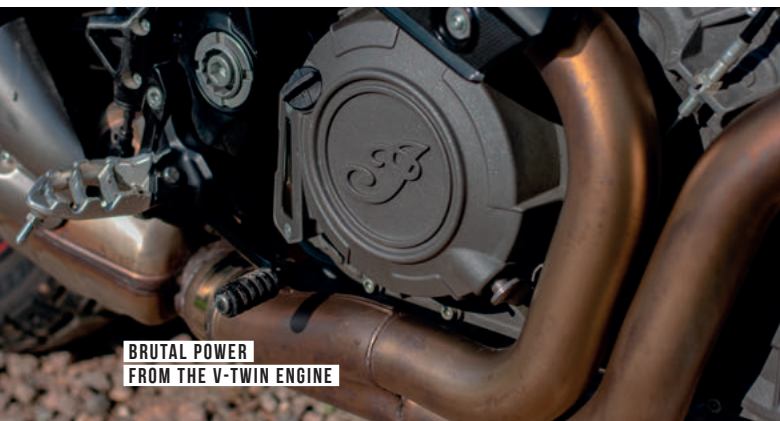
However, once on the road, any gripes I had soon melted away as I got into the groove of riding the FTR. It's part cruiser, part naked bike, with a comfortable upright seating position that straddles the two, and enough engine vibration to provide cruis-



HAPPY CRUISING
ALONG AT LOW RPM



THE FTR CAN FEEL
UNWILY ON THE TRAILS



BRUTAL POWER
FROM THE V-TWIN ENGINE



THE ANALOGUE DASH
SUITS THE RETRO STYLE

er-style character without causing too much fatigue. At 6' tall, the 840mm seat height allowed me to plant both feet firmly on the floor at traffic lights, although once my feet were on the foot pegs, the acute bend in my legs led them to start aching after half an hour or so.

Up front is a simple yet stylish analogue speedometer, accompanied by a small LCD display featuring basic information like a fuel gauge, odometer and gear position indicator. There are no bells and whistles in the instrumentation department, much like the rest of the bike, but the simple approach suits this retro style of motorcycle. There are also no rider modes or traction control settings to switch through, and no high-tech internal computer monitoring your every move and adjusting how the bike performs. Apart from ABS, the FTR Rally's performance is governed by good old-fashioned inputs from your hands, feet, and body. The result is a similarly stripped-back visceral riding experience to my Triumph Bonneville, although with a hell of a lot more torque and power.

One creature comfort that does come as standard is cruise control which is controlled by a switch on the handlebar. To be honest, I was a little surprised to see cruise control appear on a bike that wasn't designed to cover long-distances, but then I remembered this is a machine predominantly made for the American market where long straight roads stretching to the horizon abound.

BRUTAL POWER

At 240kg (wet), the FTR Rally is certainly a heavy beast, but open up that V-twin monster and it thrusts you down the road like a cannon ball fired from a pirate ship. There's a brutality to the power delivery (peak torque is a whopping 120Nm at 6,000rpm) that's exhilarating and scary in equal measure. While it would be disingenuous to say Indian's engineers built a violently powerful engine, simply shoved it into a chassis, and shipped it to dealerships, it does sometimes feel that way. Boy, it's a lot of fun.

While the bike is happy to cruise along the road at low rpm, it needs very little encouragement to become a complete hooligan. The raw, instant power delivery can quickly overwhelm – smooth it certainly isn't. Care certainly needed to be taken in corners when a couple of ill-timed twists of my wrist laid down massive slabs of torque through the rear wheel and left me running out of road fast. The threat of this fierce burst of low-end grunt occurring at any time means the FTR Rally is a bike that needs to be kept under control with a watchful eye at all times. It's not a forgiving machine and I wouldn't recommend spending too much time staring at the scenery.

However, once I'd got to grips with how to keep the power caged until I wanted to release it, I soon realised there is more to the Indian than good looks and low-end grunt. Give the aluminium bars a nudge of counter steer and the FTR Rally's spoked 19" ►

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £12,149
- ✓ **ENGINE** Liquid-cooled V-Twin
- ✓ **CAPACITY** 1,203cc
- ✓ **GEARBOX** Six speed
- ✓ **POWER** 123bhp @ 8,250rpm
- ✓ **TORQUE** 120 Nm @ 6,000 rpm
- ✓ **SUSPENSION** Front; 43 mm inverted telescopic cartridge fork / 150 mm. Rear; Monotube IFP / 150 mm
- ✓ **BRAKES** Front; Dual 320mm x t5 rotor with four-piston callipers. Rear; Single 265mm x t5 rotor with two-piston callipers
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 240kg (wet)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 13l
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 815mm-853mm
- ✓ **GROUND CLEARANCE** 183mm

front wheel dives into turns nimbly. I admit, I was expecting a 240kg piece of American muscle to be a bit of a lazy bloater on the road but it carved its way through the country lanes of the Cotswolds like a knife slicing through a Christmas turkey.

It also provides a comfortable ride, the suspension doing a decent job of soaking up the bumps and undulations on country lanes while ensuring I received plenty of feel from the road. The brakes, a double-disc four-piston calliper up front and a single-disc two piston calliper at the rear, provided plenty of initial bite and were certainly powerful enough to stop the juggernaut in full flow.

SOFT ROADING

As I mentioned earlier, the FTR Rally is the 'off-road' version of the standard FTR 1200 so, after getting to grips with it on the road, I took it along a few green lanes.

On paper, the bike sits firmly in the 'soft roader' camp of motorcycles, which is reflected in its cast 19" front and 18" rear wheels, limited 150mm of suspension travel (front and rear), and 183mm of ground clearance. The underbelly of the bike is also worryingly exposed and I can imagine inflicting plenty of damage on rockier terrain.

As I cruised along a selection of light dirt and gravel trails, the suspension proved more than capable of soaking up the ruts and bumps I encountered, and overall, the bike was a pleasant ride. Unfortunately, the standing position is unconventional and uncomfortable due to the foot pegs being angled downwards and positioned further back than you'll find on most adventure bikes.

When it was time to take on a few descents with loose surfaces, the bike's heft came into play and it began to feel unwieldy. This wasn't helped by the relatively wide front tyre which, rather than slicing into the loose trail material to provide grip, felt a little skittish as it danced over the surface. And, the lack of an 'off-road' rider mode to temper the bursts of torque and power on offer meant the very real threat of ending up in a hedge was never far away.

While the FTR 1200 is certainly capable of taking on a few green lanes, it's nowhere near as competent in the dirt as a motorcycle like the Triumph Scrambler 1200 XE for example, which shares the Indian's retro good looks but is mighty impressive off road. However, if you have the experience and skill to take the FTR Rally on gnarlier terrain, it will rise to the challenge but the reality is there is a world of bikes out there better suited to riding off road.

CONCLUSION

As adventure bikers we make a number of demands of our motorcycles. For instance, you might ride long-distances on tour, carry plenty of luggage, and occasionally travel with a pillion rider. If this is the case you'll need a machine that can do all this in comfort. You might also enjoy riding off road and appreciate a bike that you can grow into as your skills improve. In these scenarios, the FTR Rally sits wide of the mark. It doesn't have the comfort, range in its 13l fuel tank (around 120 miles), off-road prowess, or luggage options to meet those demands, although the rather fetching soft bag provided with my test bike (an optional extra) did prove handy during trips to the supermarket.

However, if you are a second bike owner (or contemplating becoming one), you'll likely make different demands of that motorcycle. If top of your list are stylish good looks, an engine note that arouses something primal within, oodles of character, and a machine that makes you feel as cool as Marlon Brando, Steve McQueen, and James Dean rolled into one, then in this scenario, the Indian FTR Rally unequivocally nails it. **ABR**



AS A COMMUTER

Let's be clear, this is no winter hack to commute to work on. In fact, it would be a crime to subject a bike this good-looking to the crud and salt found on UK roads on a daily basis. However, on those glorious summer days when the sun shines and the sky is blue, I can think of nothing better than cruising to work to the soundtrack of the Indian's 1,203cc engine, and you're guaranteed to turn heads in the office car park.

AS AN OFF-ROADER

Indian says the FTR Rally is its first dual-sport bike but this is pushing the definition a bit far. Yes, riding it on a few green lanes was fun, and it certainly has the suspension travel and handling to tackle light trails, but it is also heavy and cumbersome in the dirt. You'll need plenty of talent and bravery to push it any harder than the soft-roading it was intended for. The standing position is also far too awkward to spend more than brief periods in it.

AS A WEEKEND TOURER

The FTR Rally is loud, brash, and unrefined but it's also a lot of fun on twisty country lanes. And, while its image may be one of an urban brawler, rather than country gent, I'd happily saddle up and head off on it for the weekend in search of some glorious roads. Luggage options are limited so make sure you pack light.

AS A CONTINENTAL ROAD TOURER

If your brand of continental road touring involves time spent on high-speed European motorways, a lack of weather protection and limited fuel range means the Indian isn't ideally suited to a quick blast to the Alps. However, if you've got the time to take slower roads, and you're prepared to make plenty of stops, then the FTR Rally would make a very cool continental cruiser.

AS AN RTW OVERLANDER

As the saying goes 'any bike can be an adventure bike' and the FTR Rally is certainly capable of taking you around the globe. However, a lack of fuel range would be a pain and I'd certainly stick to tarmac and lighter trails. In reality, there are plenty of bikes better suited to a RTW trip, although the lack of sophisticated electronics would make the FTR Rally simple to repair if you were to break down in remote areas.

AS A PILLION CARRIER

The FTR Rally isn't a tall bike which made it easy for my wife to hop onto the pillion perch. Once onboard, she found the seating position "unusual and a bit awkward", with the pegs located higher and further forward than she would have liked. It was OK for a short Sunday blast, but she was keen to jump off after an hour.



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YAMAHA

TÉNÉRÉ 700

James Oxley sets off on a weekend of mixed riding to discover if the mid-size Ténéré lives up to its glowing reputation



D

uring the making of this issue of ABR, Founder and Publisher Alun had a minor off while greenlaning on his long-term review bike, the

Ténéré 700. A twisted leg meant a short break from motorcycling was in order, which gave me the opportunity to take temporary custody of his Ténéré.

I know Alun had been enjoying the bike and I'd also heard countless glowing reports from a good mate of mine who has put more than 10,000 miles on his own Ténéré 700 in the past year. In fact, he's become somewhat evangelical about it and assures me it more than lives up to the excitement that surrounded the bike's launch last year. So, to say I was excited as Alun wheeled the Ténéré out of his garage one Friday after work and handed me the keys would be an understatement.

Ahead of me was a weekend of mixed riding including a motorway commute, a selection of twisty country roads, along with a few green lanes thrown in for good measure. Leaving Alun behind, I rode through the suburban streets of Stratford upon Avon and I immediately understood what all the fuss was about. For a motorcycle that looks like a big trail bike, it feels incredibly poised and well balanced on the road. I couldn't help but sport a big smile as I darted in and out of the queues of rush

hour traffic and then swept along A-roads, before joining the motorway as I rode my usual weekend commute from the Midlands to Cornwall.

For a brief period I was smitten, but four hours and 250 miles on the motorway later, the gloss had worn off. In fact, I arrived home a broken man. The Ténéré's small screen had exposed me to the elements and the resulting buffeting had battered me into submission. The weak headlights also caused my eyes constant strain in the dark as I searched the road ahead for hazards, and the ergonomics caused me so much back pain, I almost collapsed into a crumpled heap as I levered myself off the bike at the end of my journey.

However, it's said that everything seems better after a good night's sleep, so the next morning I set off to give the Ténéré another chance. I launched the bike into a series of country lanes and it responded with agile and flickable glee. The bike felt perfectly at home between 50-60mph darting along the narrow Cornish roads bordered by tall hedgerows. In fact, I was having so much fun I wondered if my experiences the previous the night had all been just been a bad dream.

The bike proved even more enjoyable as I barrelled down a few green lanes, its poise and balance transferring from road to dirt seamlessly. However, as I upped the speed, I was surprised to find the front wheel rather skittish when I hit larger rocks on the trails, and I managed to bottom out the suspension at around 30mph a couple

of times while riding over some relatively shallow lumps and bumps. Despite this, I was impressed with how the Ténéré performed during my morning on a few trails, particularly on slower, tighter sections where that poise and balance I mentioned earlier were sublime.

So, my first weekend with the Ténéré 700 was one of mixed riding and mixed feelings. The highs of whipping along country roads and playing on green lanes were tempered by the lows of an uncomfortable motorway slog. It all made me think the Ténéré is a bike best enjoyed at a more sedate pace, because at slower speeds, it really is rather good. **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



HONDA

AFRICA TWIN AND AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS

Ollie Rooke spends a week riding the standard Africa Twin to see how it compares to his long-term Adventure Sports model

A

nyone I've spoken to about the Honda Africa Twin Adventure Sports of late, wouldn't need to be a codebreaker working out of

Bletchley Park to deduce that I've taken a liking to Honda's formidable adventure bike. It's agile and responsive in the twisties, comfortable over long-distances, and confidence-inspiring on green lanes.

So, it was with some sadness that I said farewell to the motorcycle for a few days after dropping it off with Honda in Corby for an 8,000-mile service. Usually, the sight of the bike disappearing behind the workshop doors would have made my bottom lip wobble, but any loss I was feeling was tempered by the fact the good folks at Honda had agreed to lend me a standard Africa Twin model in the interim.

I couldn't wait to discover the differences between the two bikes. On paper they don't seem too stark, although the standard Africa Twin, with a smaller tank capacity of 18.8l (compared to the 24.8l tank on the Adventure Sports), has a kerb weight of 226kg, while the larger bike is slightly bulkier at 238kg.

While I've never considered the Adventure Sports overly heavy, I quickly noticed that the standard Africa Twin was more flickable in the turns, while the acceleration and braking also benefit from that lower weight. All this results in a bike that

is more fun to ride and I felt myself throwing into turns more aggressively than I would have done so on the larger machine.

However, despite the base model edging ahead in the twisties, the Adventure Sports emerged as my favourite on A-roads and motorways where that extra weight helps it remain more planted and less deterred by crosswinds than the smaller bike.

It was on the motorway that a more pressing issue with the base Africa Twin became evident too: its stubby screen. I assume Honda equipped the bike with a small screen to make it more off-road focused (a taller screen can obscure your view of the trail ahead), but a large capacity adventure bike needs to perform on the road first and foremost, and the lack of wind protection on the base model left me seriously fatigued after a two-hour motorway blast. It was all the more frustrating knowing the excellent screen on the Adventure Sports model could have easily been bolted on to the bike I was riding.

When it comes to greenlaning, both Africa Twins are very capable machines, and while I always enjoy riding the Adventure Sports on the trails, the standard bike did feel lighter and more agile off road. It would certainly be my choice of Africa Twin if I was planning to spend plenty of time away from the tarmac.

After a week of riding the standard bike, I returned to Corby to swap it back for the Adventure Sports, and on the way over, I pondered which one I would buy. If I was commuting in the city, or regularly riding

off-road, I'd lean towards the lighter, nimbler base model. However, the majority of the 8,000 miles I've ridden on the Adventure Sports have been on motorways and A-roads, and it's in this arena the bigger bike excels. So, despite having a blast on the base model, I was happy to leave Corby with the motorcycle I would choose if my own money was on the line. Here's to the next 8,000 miles. **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE (ADVENTURE SPORTS MODEL)

- ✓ **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 reflects on the moment he became smitten with a Ducati Multistrada



I

remember vividly the first time I truly yearned for a Ducati Multistrada. My good mate Pierre and I had flown

to Gran Canaria one chilly November for a week of winter sun.

For us, this involved renting motorbikes and exploring as much of the holiday island as we could on two wheels, rather than sipping cocktails on the beach at a tacky tourist resort (although we did manage to squeeze in a few cocktails during the trip).

Being rather disorganised, we didn't book bikes to rent in advance and subsequently struggled to find anyone willing to loan two sweaty and increasingly desperate English chaps motorcycles, especially as we had no accommodation booked, hence no address on the island to provide to a bike rental company.

Thankfully, perseverance paid off and we managed to secure two world weary BMW F 650 GS bikes for the week. Balding tyres and rusty chains aside, they were perfect and we struck out across the island to the putt-putting of their single-cylinder engines, excited to be exploring somewhere new once again.

Which brings me to the Ducati Multistrada. It was our fourth day on the road and we were winding our way along yet

more gloriously smooth, twisting tarmac, this time towards Pico de las Nieves, the second highest point on Gran Canaria. As we snaked our way up upwards, a brilliant white Multistrada came into view.

There was something angelic about the sight of that stunning machine glinting in the sunshine as it glided gracefully up the mountainside. It's rider and pillion were in no rush, and under usual circumstances I would have whizzed by at an opportune spot with a cheery wave, but I was entranced. Instead, I hung back and followed the flowing lines the Ducati made, taking in the glorious sight.

It was at that point I vowed that one day, I too would experience the joy of riding of a Ducati Multistrada up a snaking mountain road in the sunshine. I admit, I've never yearned to ride a bike quite as much.

Well, my dreams have almost come true. I have the keys to a Ducati Multistrada 1260 S Grand Tour and boy, it's a sight to behold. However, any plans I had to ride it over mountain passes were put on hold by the assorted lockdown and travel restrictions we've endured this year.

Despite this, even riding the Multistrada along the country lanes of the Cotswolds brought forth glorious memories of following that gorgeous Ducati in Gran Canaria as it glided up the mountainside, but this time, I'm the lucky so and so in the saddle.

The Multistrada has a way of stirring emotions in a way that other bikes don't.

It's a machine that never fails to elicit a sense of joy and pride when I'm riding it. And, while other motorcycles might be more comfortable and more practical, there aren't any that make me feel quite so special. It's about time we found some winter sun together. **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 callipers, radial master cylinder, cornering ABS. Rear; 265mm disc, 2-piston floating calliper, cornering ABS
- ✓ **GEARBOX** 6-speed with Ducati Quick Shift
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 215kg (dry)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 20L
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 825mm–845mm



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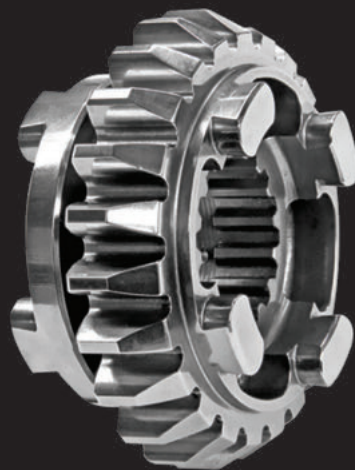
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KTM

790 ADVENTURE

A 15-hour journey gives **James Oxley** plenty of time to reflect on the long-distance touring credentials of the KTM

It was 11pm by the time I pulled into my driveway and switched of the engine of the KTM 790 Adventure. The orange haze of the streetlights reflected my fuzzy state of mind. I was shattered after a 15-hour journey plotting the latest TomTom Amazing Britain route through the south east of England (you can read all about it on page 35).

It had been a thoroughly enjoyable day but the final 200-mile slog from Dover up to Stratford upon Avon in the Midlands had done me in, despite stopping for an energy-boosting KFC along the way.

I learned two things that day. Firstly, 15 hours is longer than I want to spend on a motorcycle while riding in the UK, and secondly, the KTM 790 Adventure is far more comfortable than it looks.

You see, despite the late hour, I hopped off the bike without the usual aches, pains, and flurry of old-man groans that usually accompany the end of a long journey for me. And, my backside wasn't suffering any of the usual numbing or soreness that it commonly complains off after extended periods on other bikes.

Sure, I was feeling a bit stiff, but nothing more, and I've got the KTM to thank for that. At first glance, you might wonder how the 790 Adventure manages to be such a comfortable long-distance tourer. After all, the seat is firmer than

most, the riding position doesn't look overly roomy, and while the screen offers decent weather protection, it's not the largest around.

However, the magic happens when you combine all these elements together on the road. For me, as a 6' tall man with a 32" inner leg measurement, the hands, backside, feet triangle are near perfect, and the seat that felt so firm to begin with has become supremely comfortable now my arse has got used to it. And, while the screen could offer more coverage, it manages to channel turbulent air away from my head, chest, and shoulders, helping to create a relaxed ride.

If you combine the excellent ergonomics with a feisty 94bhp engine that provides more than enough power for high-speed overtakes, along with stable and controlled handling on the motorway, you have a recipe for a very good long-distance touring bike indeed.

Now, I'm aware comfort is a very personally thing, and I feel for motorcycle manufacturers that need to design a machines to suit all different shapes and sizes of rider, but in this instance, the clever folks at KTM have hit the sweet spot for a rider of my shape and size.

As I wearily wheeled the 790 Adventure into my garage and shut the doors behind me, I spent a few minutes reflecting on a machine I've developed a genuine affection for, not only during that day's ride, but also over the nine or so months it's been my long term. True, it may not be the most attractive bike

with its praying mantis-style headlights and squat appearance, but that adds to its character and there's no denying it's a supremely capable and versatile motorcycle.

No matter what I've asked of it over the past nine months, it has risen to the challenge whether I've been travelling long distances, chasing mates along country roads, or plunging down green lanes. To me, the 790 Adventure is an adventure bike in its truest form: Excellent on the road, very good off it, comfortable over long distances, and a hell of a lot of fun to ride. **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £9,799
- ✓ **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 callipers, 320mm disc. Rear; 2 piston floating calliper, 260mm disc
- ✓ **SEAT HEIGHT** 850mm
- ✓ **WEIGHT** 189kg (dry)
- ✓ **TANK CAPACITY** 20L
- ✓ **FUEL CONSUMPTION** 68.9mpg

HONDA

CRF450L

Julian Challis says farewell to the Honda CRF450L during one last adventure along the Trans Euro Trail



R

egular readers of my bi-monthly long-term reports will recall that as the country was gradually emerging from the travel restrictions of spring and summer, I was due to take the CRF450L on a cross-country jaunt from Whitby to Morecambe and back in the russet hued days of late September. A total of 14 of us from the Bristol Trail Riders Fellowship were booked in for the trip which promised epic trail riding and messing about in equal measure.

And then it all went wrong faster than a two stroke running without premix, the whole plan seizing up with an almost audible wail. The second wave started to gain momentum, the north of the country became a virus hotspot and the Game of Thrones-sounding rule of six came into force. The trip was dead in the water.

So, with some of the guys heading to Wales for a smaller adventure, I decided to use the time to revisit the southern leg of the Trans Euro Trail (TET) with just one other rider, my mate Pat. Less hassle with numbers, less organisation, and crucially, in an area that was relatively low on infections. Jeez, what a criteria to plan a trip!

Preparing the Honda for the journey was relatively easy as I'd not long completed the Great Western Trail, a trip you can read all about on page 47 of this very

issue of ABR. The main change that was a priority for this trip would be to swap out the dual sport Dunlop tyres for a set of full-on, road-legal enduro hoops. Although the lanes on the southern TET are the least challenging on the entire route, the prospect of far more mud and sloppy stuff during the trip meant I was happy to stack my options towards off-road competence rather than tarmac busting grip.

A call to the ever-obliging Dave at Dunlop had a set of wonderfully knobbly and purposeful Geomax Enduro hoops arriving chez Challis in a couple of days. Suitably fitted with heavy duty tubes, they looked ideal for anything from monsoon to desert conditions. And as it turned out we had just about both.

With Pat on his KTM EXC 350 Six Days, our bikes were equally matched for the task and perfect for the trails. The journey passing effortlessly with nothing more serious than a collapsed mousse on the KTM to spoil our fun. We arrived at the somewhat prosaic end point of the TET (or start point depending on which direction you ride) at the Port of Dover some 602 miles and four days later. Not even the September drizzle could dampen our spirits. The full story of the trip will be in ABR soon.

Sadly, that was the end of my time with the CRF450L. It has now gone back to Honda headquarters with nothing but good memories. Although I previously thought the KTM 690 Enduro R was perhaps the perfect TET bike, the Honda has proved to be a step beyond that and more. It's been the ideal bike for my preferred

mix of weekend trail riding combined with longer jaunts over multiple days, and if circumstances had been different, the Honda and I would have explored further into Europe. It's a beautifully well-made and supremely capable off-road bike, and a great lightweight adventure bike too.

The CRF450L is possibly one of the most underrated bikes that Honda has released in recent years. If one comes up at a local dealer, you should jump at the chance because you will bloody love it. **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** £9,469
- ✓ **ENGINE** liquid-cooled, single-cylinder, four-stroke unicom
- ✓ **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

TRIUMPH

TIGER 900 RALLY PRO

With the honeymoon period over, **Ollie Rooke** finds some niggles creeping in while riding his long-term Tiger 900 Rally Pro



I

tend to hit a stage in any fledgling relationship when, after a few months, the rose-tinted spectacles

start to slip and I begin to notice little irritations that had previously escaped my attention.

I usually have similar experiences with motorcycles, and recently, I found myself slipping past the honeymoon phase with my long-term Triumph Tiger 900 Rally Pro. Up until the past few weeks, it could do no wrong as I basked in the joy of riding the bike. However, after living with it for six months, I've found the slight niggles that I was all too happy to overlook to begin with have morphed into annoyances.

With this in mind, I've decided to indulge in a little motorcycle relationship counselling and discuss three things I like about the Tiger, and three things I could certainly live without.

LIKES

Comfort

The seat is a delight to spend time on for extended periods. The backside, hands, feet triangle fits my 6' frame like a glove, and the screen and fairing do a brilliant job of deflecting air away from my head and body without creating buffeting or turbulence.

Quick shifter

The Tiger's quick shifter has to be one of the smoothest I've ever used. Whether I'm riding around town, off-road, or in the

twisties, I can pull away in first gear and neglect using the clutch lever until I pull in at the end of a long day on the road.

Winter riding

The heated grips and heated seat keep me toasty in the saddle and every piece of switchgear is backlit, a handy feature at night that some other manufacturers neglect. The spotlights also do a magnificent job of illuminating the road ahead without blinding oncoming drivers. In fact, they almost act as cornering lights, which don't feature on the Rally Pro.

DISLIKES

TFT display

On paper the Tiger's vast 7" TFT display should be class leading. However, all four of the available layouts are cluttered and in need of a redesign. The warning light system also needs some refinement. Watching a warning alert, accompanied by a separate fuel light, ping on when I still have a quarter of a tank remaining is excessive.

Resets

Another gripe I have with the Tiger is the fact that many of the settings need to be turned back on after switching the ignition off. Even after stopping for fuel or a quick photo, I need to turn back on the heated seat, heated grips, spotlights, and should I be riding on a green lane, the off-road riding modes.

Switch gear

Despite the fact I enjoy the bike's backlit controls, Triumph has crammed the Tiger's left switch gear with nearly all of the

buttons needed to operate extras like the spotlights and heated grips, along with the joystick used to scroll through the menus on the TFT display. This leads to my hand often being overstretched as I fumble to reach for the correct button to press.

It would also be more intuitive if the positions of the indicator switch and joystick were swapped over. In their current locations, I sometimes mix up the two and find myself inadvertently scrolling through my texts, fuel range, and phone book as I try to indicate for a corner. **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** 850-870mm

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EQUIPMENT ILLUSTRATED:

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- 2 x OS-6 ADVENTURE PACKS mounted on crash bars
- 1 x US-20 DRYPACK / TAIL PACK mounted on OS-BASE
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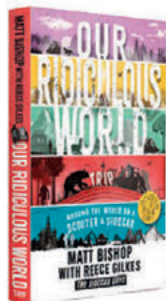
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BMW

S 1000 XR TE

Bryn Davies looks at the
BMW S 1000 XR's two-up touring capabilities



In the last issue of *Adventure Bike Rider* magazine, I wrote a more comprehensive long-term update than usual, giving my in-depth thoughts on the BMW S 1000 XR and what it has been like to live with. In that piece, I spoke briefly about the bike's pillion carrying capabilities and said: "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)".

I still stand by what I wrote, but I wanted to touch on that again as I've now ridden more miles two-up. Better yet, I'll let you hear it from the horse's mouth as I asked my partner, Naomi, what she thought of the pillion experience.

"I liked the S 1000 XR. It wasn't the most comfortable bike I've ridden pillion on, but it was OK," She told me. "The seat was harder than I would have liked, but the position I was sat in (or the 'feet, knee, arse triangle' as Bryn puts it) was good. The pillion seat is higher than on the adventure bikes I've been a passenger on before and it was actually a struggle to get on."

Naomi's been on plenty of tours with me and has been pillion on most of the big adventure bikes on the market, so she knows what's good and what's not. It was interesting that, when I asked her whether she'd be happy to spend a week on the back of the

bike, she said, "yes, but I'd need to stay in a hotel rather than camp after spending all day on that seat." Truth be told, that's how I feel as a rider of the bike as well.

One of the most influential factors in Naomi's comfort was the padded back rest provided by the top box. Without this, her answer to the above question would be very different. This brings me nicely onto the bike's luggage system.

For a full set of luggage on the S 1000 XR you're looking at £1,360 (£490 for the top box and £870 for the panniers). That's a lot to pay for plastic luggage and, to be brutally honest, I think it's pretty ugly. The top box in particular looks more like a lunch box.

That being said, it's some of the most hassle-free luggage I've had the pleasure of using. The locks are matched to the bike's key and mounting and dismounting is as easy as pulling a lever and grabbing the suitcase-style handle. Just what you want when you're heading into your hotel after a long day on the road. It's also great that both panniers (30l in size each) and the top box (also 30l) will happily hold a helmet each (unless it has a peak) which is great for when you're riding solo and two-up.

It's also worth me mentioning that the bike's mannerisms and handling remain faultless even when loaded up. This is largely down to BMW's excellent Dynamic ESA (electronic suspension), which is constantly adjusting the suspension's damping to best cope with the varying conditions you're riding over and through.

With all this said, perhaps I'll revise my opening statement slightly to: The BMW S

1000 XR is definitely still a 'me' bike, but it carries a pillion effortlessly. Yes, there are far more comfortable and accessible perches for a passenger to sit upon, but if your better half can put up with a few aches, is happy to experience the thrill of a high-performance bike, and is nimble enough to climb onto the seat, two of you can tour happily. Just make sure you get the top box. **ABR**

SPECS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **PRICE** From £16,220
- ✓ **ENGINE** 999cc Liquid-cooled In-line four-cylinder
- ✓ **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



It was during a motorcycle tour through France and Spain that I first came to appreciate the faff-free pleasure of wearing a flip-front helmet. My awakening began after rolling off the ferry into the French port of Roscoff. Rather than going through the rigmarole of taking off my gloves and helmet at immigration to reveal my handsome face to the border patrol officer, I simply flipped up my lid, flashed my passport and a smile, and whizzed off in seconds leaving a queue of motorists behind me.

The convenience continued at petrol stations, in shops, at toilet stops, when talking to locals, and while stuffing my face with snacks and drinks at the roadside.

Spending a few moments taking off a motorcycle helmet and gloves may not seem much of a chore, but on tour you tend to find yourself doing it a lot so the convenience of simply being able to flip up the front of your helmet isn't to be underestimated. And, when temperatures rocketed in Spain, it was a relief to ride with the chin bar in the up position with a cooling wind in my face.

PROS AND CONS

So, what exactly is a flip-front helmet? Put simply, they are characterised by the ability to lift the chin bar above the visor, effectively creating an open-face helmet. As I discovered on tour,

they make regular tasks like stopping for a fag or chatting to your mates at the roadside easier and more convenient.

With all this in mind, a flip-front helmet might be sounding like the perfect choice of lid right now but there are some downsides. In general, they suffer from more wind noise than full-face helmets, although this will vary between manufacturers and individual designs. And there is also the nagging doubt that a moveable chin bar won't be as sturdy as a solid full-face option if you were to crash and land on your kisser.

Quality motorcycle helmets need to pass rigorous safety tests but in the past we have had poor quality flip-front helmets in the ABR office with chin bars that broke off when we dropped them. With this in mind, it's important to spend some time getting the best quality flip front you can afford.

SAFETY FIRST

Thankfully, you can take steps to ensure your new helmet offers sufficient protection by keeping an eye out for the correct safety certificates. All helmets worn on UK roads must meet the British Standard BS 6658:1985 and carry the BSI Kitemark. Those that don't must comply with UNECE Regulation 22.05, or comply with a standard set by a member of the European Economic Area offering at least the same level of protection as the BSI Kitemark.

FLIP-FRONT TOURING HELMETS

**BRYN DAVIES, JAMES OXLEY AND OLLIE ROOKE PUT 11 FLIP-FRONT HELMETS TO THE TEST
TO HELP YOU CHOOSE THE PERFECT LID FOR YOUR NEXT BIKE TOUR**

When it comes to flip-front helmets, there are additional safety marks to look for. Helmets designed to protect you when the chin guard is down and locked into position should clearly display type P certification (often on a tag on the chin strap) revealing it has passed the relevant safety test. Helmets that are designed to offer protection with the chin bar in the raised position will display type J certification. If a helmet is approved to be worn both in the up and down positions, it will have a P and J safety certificate. These helmets are often referred to as being dual homologated.

You may also come across flip-front helmets that feature a chin bar which hasn't been designed to provide any protection at all. These will be labelled NP and would not be something I'd recommend for touring, particularly if long journeys at motorway speeds are on the cards.

FIT AND COMFORT

Our heads come in all different shapes and sizes and so do motorcycle helmets, which is why it is important to try before you buy. COVID-19 precautions may make this trickier to do these days so call ahead to your local bike shop and organise a time to try a few helmets on. Make sure you talk to the staff who should have plenty of experience at matching riders with correctly fitting lids, and don't be afraid to stroll around the shop for a few minutes wearing

different helmets to get a good feel for them. You may look a bit silly but it's worth spending plenty of time getting this stage right because an ill-fitting helmet can prove to be painfully uncomfortable, lead to increased wind noise, and may not protect you if you crash.

It's also important to take a close look at the padding inside of any helmet you intend to buy. Your head could be spending days or weeks nestled inside on your next summer tour so ensure the padding is comfortable, and ideally, removable so it can be taken out and washed once in a while.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Once you've found a helmet that meets all the necessary safety requirements and fits your head perfectly, it's worth considering what features you'd like included in your new lid before you part with your cash. For example, does it come with an internal sun visor? Is it Pinlock ready? What is the ventilation like? What type of chin strap fastener does it have?

Personally, I always opt for a helmet with a built-in sun visor and I prefer the security of a double D-ring fastener. I also don't mind some extra wind noise caused by plenty of ventilation if it stops my glasses from fogging up. Chances are your preferences are different to mine so make sure you spend a bit of time mulling over what features you can and can't ride without. **ABR**



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ANATOMY

OF A FLIP-FRONT TOURING HELMET

FLIP LOCKING MECHANISM

Not found on all flip front helmets, this little switch will allow you to lock the chin bar in place once it's been lifted into the up position.

SAFETY RATING

All helmets worn on UK roads must meet various safety criteria, and be stamped with either the British Standards Institute (BSI) Kitemark, or ECE 22-05.

DETACHABLE LININGS

The linings inside your helmet should be removable and washable. Nobody likes a smelly helmet.

PINLOCK MOUNTING POINTS

While visors come with anti-fog treatment, the best way to prevent them from steaming up is to make use of a Pinlock insert. Your helmet will need to have mounting points on the inside of the visor (a blob of plastic on each end), and it's great if the Pinlock insert comes included with the helmet.

ANTI-FOG VISOR

There's nothing more frustrating than a visor that constantly fogs up as soon as it's closed, and it can even be dangerous. As such, you'll find that most visors will be treated with anti-fog coatings, though the effectiveness of these varies wildly from helmet to helmet.

VENTS

It could be argued that ventilation options on a flip front lid aren't quite as important as they are on a full face, as you can simply lift the chin bar up when you're getting too warm. There are, however instances when this isn't sensible or appropriate (riding at speed on the motorway or when it's raining), so effective ventilation is still vitally important. A well-designed chin vent will help prevent the visor from steaming up, while brow vents will allow cooling air to enter the top of the helmet. Exhaust vents, found at the rear, work by drawing air through the lid, helping to keep you cool when it's warm. We like our vents to be closable and easy to operate with a single gloved-up hand.

VISOR TAB

It's good to have multiple visor opening tabs (the protruding tab that allows you to lift the visor). For ease of use, it's preferable that it's on the left or centre so that you can use your clutch hand to lift the visor when riding. They should be large enough to use easily with a gloved-up hand.

INTERNAL SUN VISOR

A feature that's essential for those sunny days. They're better than sunglasses as they provide more coverage over the face, and if you're travelling through mountain tunnels while touring you can quickly retract them while on the move.

CHIN STRAP

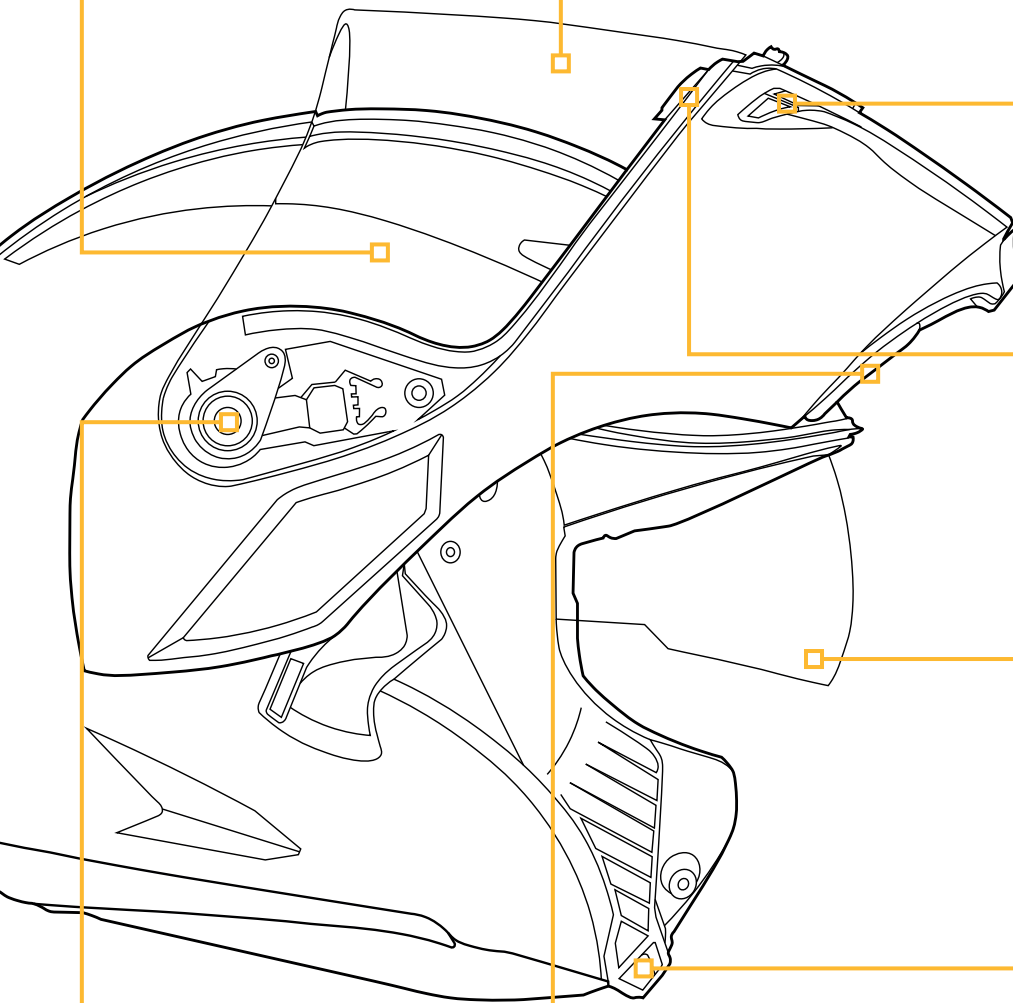
Crucial for keeping the helmet on your head in the event of an accident. These typically come in two varieties: ratchet strap or double D buckles. Ratchet straps don't offer the strength of the double D method, but they're more user-friendly to use and quicker to fasten and unfasten.

QUICK RELEASE VISOR

This makes it easier to change a damaged visor or, if you have multiple visors for differing weather conditions, it'll allow you to switch in seconds.

CHIN GUARD

A piece of material beneath the chin which acts as a wind break to stop drafts wafting up on cold days. Ideally, they'll be removable for maximum versatility.



Z1R SOLARIS

£105

WWW.PARTSEUROPE.EU

While it may not be a household name in the UK, for the last 25 years American motorcycle clothing manufacturer Z1R has developed a reputation stateside for producing competitively priced products for road and trail riders. With this in mind, I was intrigued to see how its entry, the Solaris helmet, stood up to the demands of British autumnal weather.

Priced at £105 and made from an injection-moulded polycarbonate shell, the Solaris is the least expensive helmet on test. However, the good-quality finish and assorted touring-friendly features offer great value for money and disguise that low price point very well.

While the Solaris weighs in at 1,633g, which is above average among the modular helmets on test, it feels well balanced and stable when riding. Inside, mesh inserts help cover up the unsightly EPS foam (a nice touch some competitors have neglected), while the moisture-wicking, fully-removable polyester liner offers a comfortable fit for extended time in the saddle.

Chin and brow vents allow airflow, along with an exhaust at the rear, but the venting isn't particularly effective and wearing the helmet in

summer will be a sweaty affair. However, on a chilly UK morning, I appreciated the warmth.

The visor offers a wide view of the world ahead although there is no Pinlock insert or mounting points. The Z1R does include a breath guard which did an admirable job of keeping heavy misting at bay. The internal sun visor is a nice touch although the mechanism is clunky to operate and feels a little cheap.

The chin bar release catch is easy to locate and operate, although the bar doesn't raise fully

if the visor is open. It's also worth noting that the helmet is not rated as dual-homologated, so keep it closed when riding. The Solaris is rather noisy at motorway speeds, even with earplugs in, which means this helmet is best suited for commutes and cruises where you won't be hitting high speeds regularly. **OR**

IN A LINE: Cheap and cheerful. A low price is disguised by plenty of features and a decent quality finish.



ABR RATING
7/10

COMFORT	7
WEIGHT	7
STYLE	7
VALUE FOR MONEY	8

ACERBIS DERWEL

£139.99

WWW.ACERBIS.COM

Hailing from Lombardy, Italy, Acerbis has made its name protecting off-road motorcyclists since the early '70s. However, it also produces helmets for road riders including the Derwel.

Priced at £139.99, the Derwel is one of the most affordable helmets on test and first impressions are promising, with its attractive matt colourway and several touring-friendly features. However, the inside of the helmet betrays the Derwel's low price. The removable and washable internal liner is pretty thin and offers little comfort, and the overall fit and finish of the helmet feels a little cheap.

The visor provides a wide field of vision although there's no Pinlock insert or mounting points which even at this price point I'd like to have seen. Unfortunately, the breath guard doesn't prevent misting on a cold morning which is a shame. It was nice to see an internal sun visor for bright days, operated by an easily located switch on the left side of the helmet. However, it didn't entirely retract back into the helmet meaning it was always slightly visible.

When it comes to ventilation, there's plenty on offer through brow and chin vents as well as

a rear exhaust. The Derwel is so well ventilated that even when the vents are closed it can feel breezy, which suits summer riding but left me feeling chilly on a brisk autumn morning. Despite the ventilation, the helmet is relatively quiet for a flip front, particularly with the price point in mind, which is pleasant when cruising at motorway speeds. At 1,591g, it's also among the lighter helmets on test.

The chin bar is easy to operate and slips into place at the top of the helmet with a reassuring

click. However, in the closed position there is a little bit of give between the chin bar and the rest of the helmet which rattles if you give it a wiggle and isn't particularly confidence inspiring. The Derwel is only designed to be worn in the closed position when riding as it isn't dual-homologated. **OR**

IN A LINE: Offering a lot at a very reasonable price, the Derwel is let down by its overall fit and finish.



ABR RATING
7/10

COMFORT	6
WEIGHT	8
STYLE	7
VALUE FOR MONEY	7

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BELL SRT-MODULAR

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WWW.RACEFXB2B.COM

American firm Bell Helmets began life in '50s California amid the hot rod and racing scenes and has since grown to become one of the most recognisable helmet brands in the world. Its entry into this group test is the SRT-Modular which arrived in a fetching black and red ribbon design reminiscent of a racing stripe you'd find on an American muscle car.

The stylish colour scheme combines with a solid fit and finish that makes the SRT-Modular look good value for money at £249.99. Weighing in at 1,076g, and made of a fibreglass shell, it is on the heavy side compared to most helmets on test but it is also nicely balanced and my neck certainly didn't feel overburdened on the road.

Once on, the helmet fitted securely yet comfortably around my head with the removable inner padding providing plenty of support and comfort. The Pinlock-ready visor (in the box) provided good vision but the release catch was a bit stiff, although it did begin to loosen up with use. The helmet is secured with a ratchet fastener.

On the road, the SRT-Modular isn't the

quietest helmet on test but the noise levels were acceptable at motorway speeds providing I wore earplugs.

The chin bar catch is easy to use with gloves and the bar locks into place with a reassuringly secure clunk. The SRT-Modular does not display type J certification so it hasn't been designed to be ridden with the chin bar up.

The helmet comes with an in-built sunshield which would have benefitted from dropping down a few mm further to provide more

coverage, and the slider used to operate it was a little stiff. Ventilation is provided by two chin vents, a brow vent, and two exhausts at the rear, all of which allowed plenty of air to flow through the helmet.

Apart from a couple of niggles, the SRT-Modular is a solid performing helmet overall, that looks great, at a very reasonable price. **JO**

IN A LINE: A solid flip front that won't break the bank.



ABR RATING

8/10

COMFORT	8
WEIGHT	6
STYLE	9
VALUE FOR MONEY	8

SHARK HELMETS EVOJET

£259.99

WWW.NEVIS.UK.COM

In 1988, two brothers from the South of France joined forces with the aim of designing a helmet that was safer than the ones they'd been racing in. The result was the first Shark helmet. More than three decades later their company has become a popular brand throughout the world and across biking disciplines, from motocross to MotoGP and everything in between.

Shark's entry into this group test is the new-for-2020 Evojet which immediately stands out for its unusual visor design that extends downwards into the chin bar. The result is a goldfish bowl effect that provides a huge field of vision. The visor is actually built into the chin bar so one can't be lifted independently of the other. This means you won't be able to crack open the visor to let air in, which isn't ideal.

However, the Evojet is dual homologated so the chin bar can be worn in the raised position while riding. That moveable section of the chin bar is also very narrow so you're left with more protection around the side of your face when it is raised than you would usually find on a standard flip front. The visor doesn't feature Pinlock mounting points but it has been given an antifog

treatment. This worked fine on a crisp Autumn day but experience has shown a Pinlock is the best solution to prevent visor fogging.

The Evojet is made from thermoplastic resin, and at 1,552g, it is among the lightest helmets on test. This combined with plush internal padding, which offers plenty of support, makes the Shark a comfortable lid to wear.

Features include an internal sun visor, a ratchet fastener, and chin, brow, and exhaust vents which created just about enough airflow, but on hotter

days I imagine I'd be raising that chin bar plenty of times to cool down.

In reality, the Evojet is best suited to urban and suburban riding rather than touring, and if you like the looks, the extra vision the visor affords would make it a solid helmet for a city commute, although not being able to raise the visor independently isn't ideal. **JO**

IN A LINE: Innovative design makes for a good city commuting helmet.



ABR RATING

7/10

COMFORT	7
WEIGHT	8
STYLE	6
VALUE FOR MONEY	7

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KABUTO IBUKI

FROM £355

WWW.HONDA.CO.UK

Kabuto is Japan's third largest helmet manufacturer (behind Arai and Shoei) and it's been making helmets for just over 40 years (you might recognise the older brand name, OGK). The reason Honda submitted the Ibuki for review is because the motorcycle manufacturer has chosen Kabuto as an approved partner for the brand and will stock them at Honda franchise dealerships.

At £355, the Ibuki sits itself in the middle of the flip-front helmet price range. This is reflected in the feel of it when you take it out of the box. It doesn't feel tacky, but it doesn't have that top-drawer feeling to it either. At 1,067g, it is the second heaviest product in this group test, although I didn't find the weight being much of an issue in use.

The visor, which comes Pinlock ready, provides a good field of vision and has a nice stiffness to it, allowing you to ride with it in a 'barely open' position. This is complemented by an easy-to-use internal sun visor which does its job well, though I would have preferred it to drop down a few more mm as the edge was slightly in my line of sight.

Unusually, the flip front is operated by a small lever located under the left-hand side of the chin.



ABR RATING

8/10

COMFORT	8
WEIGHT	7
STYLE	8
VALUE FOR MONEY	8

This did take some getting used to, but I actually prefer the mechanism being positioned here instead of the 'traditional' central positioning found on other lids. Once flipped, the chin bar stays firmly in the 'up' position with a satisfying click, although it doesn't lock into place and the Ibuki isn't dual homologated.

When it comes to ventilation, the Ibuki is a bit hit and miss. You get two front-facing vents (brow and chin) and a rear exhaust vent, all of which can be closed. The brow vent and exhaust vent are

excellent, though the chin vent isn't so good, being too small to provide much use.

Overall, the Ibuki is a solid choice if you're looking for a middle-of-the-range flip-front helmet. It's well made and comfortable, the ventilation is good enough for all but the hottest days and, despite its weight, it performs well in the saddle. I'm reluctant to say it's a no-thrills steady eddy, but that's what it is. **BD**

IN A LINE: A solid choice for the price.

HJC RPHA 90S

£449.99

WWW.OXFORDPRODUCTS.COM

My first motorcycle helmet was an HJC which set me back £110. I rode it for thousands of miles throughout the UK and wider Europe and it never let me down. Sadly, one morning I found myself catapulted from my motorcycle with my helmet sliding against the asphalt. My head was unscathed but my HJC was kaput, so I went straight out and bought another.

That experience made me a fan of the brand and so it seems are many others, with HJC producing more motorcycle helmets than any other manufacturer worldwide. Since the '50s, the company has built a reputation for offering reasonably priced lids, so I was intrigued to test one of HJC's premium offerings, the RPHA 90s, priced at £449.99.

In short, I wasn't disappointed. The build quality feels solid with no unwelcome rattles or ill-fitting joins and the chin bar locks in both the raised and lowered positions with reassuringly secure clicks. The helmet is dual homologated with a chin bar release button that is easy to use while wearing gloves.

The RPHA 90s is made using HJC's composite fibre Premium Integrated Matrix, which blends



ABR RATING

9/10

COMFORT	9
WEIGHT	8
STYLE	8
VALUE FOR MONEY	9

layers of materials like fibreglass and aramid to create a strong and lightweight lid. At 1,569g, it's one of the lightest lids on test which aids comfort over long distances, while inside, the removable padding provides plenty of support and comfort. However, the helmet did prove a tight fit so I would recommend trying a size up before you buy.

In terms of features, there is a substantial sunshield along with the standard chin, brow, and exhaust vents which did a good job of getting air flowing through the helmet. The Pinlock-ready

visor (in the box) can be set to six open positions and provides plenty of vision, although I did find the metal visor release button a little fiddly to operate while wearing gloves. The helmet is fastened by metal ratchet strap.

Overall, I was impressed by the RPHA 90s and, sizing issues aside, I'd be happy to travel long distances while wearing it. **JO**

IN A LINE: Quality and comfort at a mid-range price in a good-looking package.

BMW SYSTEM 7

£495

WWW.BMW-MOTORRAD.CO.UK

Having had a BMW as my long-term loan bike for the past two years, it's only natural that I've slid my head into a lid or two from the German manufacturer. When I rode the GS, I was regularly wearing the GS Carbon, but now I'm on the S 1000 XR it only made sense to try out the System 7, BMW's premium flip-front touring helmet.

Introduced in 2017 as a successor to the popular System 6, the helmet's been designed to provide top-tier quality at a low weight. To do this, the shell of the lid is full carbon, while the inner shell is a multi-segmented EPS. These materials allow the System 7 to weigh in at 1,600g, which putting it in the middle of our weight range, which is still impressive given how incredibly light the other helmets in this group test are.

Slipping your head into the System 7, weight aside, the first thing you'll notice is the delightfully soft interior lining. This makes the lid a pleasure to wear, though you'll also notice the fit will initially feel very snug. After time the helmet bedded in and became very comfortable, though you'll definitely want to try this on before you buy.

The opening mechanism for the chin bar is amongst the smoothest and most satisfying I've

had the pleasure of using. It's nice to know that the helmet's dual homologated so, if you want to, you can ride with the chin bar flipped open.

The visor provides a good field of vision and comes Pinlock ready, though I wasn't a fan of how flimsy it feels. It is very flexible and doesn't stay open when riding which is something that became a great annoyance to me. The helmet comes with an internal sun visor, which is easily operable with gloved-up hands, and this works smoothly and nicely.

In terms of ventilation, you get chin and brow vents which are both closable and easy to operate with gloves. The in-flow of air they provide is good, though it could be improved with the addition of an exhaust vent to really draw air through. That being said, the chin bar on the System 7 is removable so you can ride with an open-face when temperatures soar. **BD**

IN A LINE: A comfortable helmet with a premium feel.



ABR RATING
8/10

COMFORT	8
WEIGHT	7
STYLE	8
VALUE FOR MONEY	8

NEXX HELMETS X.VILITUR CARBON ZERO

£499.99

WWW.FACTORYAGENCIES.CO.UK

Since its inception in 2001, Portuguese manufacturer Nexx Helmets has forged a reputation for making high-quality lids combining style and performance, with all of its products being manufactured in Portugal.

Perhaps more than any other helmet on test, I got to know the X.Vilitur Carbon Zero intimately during a 10-day, 2,000-mile motorcycle tour through France and Spain. I'd hardly worn the helmet before I set off so I was understandably a little anxious about taking it away. I needn't have worried as the X.Vilitur Carbon Zero proved to be a very competent helmet for long-distance touring.

In terms of style, the matt black and carbon finish may not make you particularly visible on the road but it looks very cool on what is a stylish lid. The fit, finish, and overall build quality is excellent with a chin bar that locks into the raised and lowered positions with a reassuring clunk. The helmet is dual homologated which means it's certificated to be used with the chin bar up, and the release button is easy to use even while wearing gloves.

Once on, the helmet fitted securely and snugly around the contours of my head, proving

perfectly comfortable during 250-mile days through France. Weighing in at 1,596g, the X.Vilitur Carbon Zero didn't strain my neck during more than a week in the saddle and noise levels were comfortable at motorway speeds.

The visor, which is Pinlock ready (in the box), provided a wide field of vision and can be set in four positions to let extra air flow through the helmet. There is also a large internal sunshield which was substantial enough to enable me to ride along at speed with the visor up. Comfort is

aided by plush inner padding that is removable for washing and the helmet is secured using a ratchet fastener.

In terms of ventilation, the chin, brow, and exhaust vents provided enough airflow to keep me cool, although I did find myself cracking the visor open on the hotter days that I rode on in Spain. **JO**

IN A LINE: Quality and comfort combine in a high-quality helmet.



ABR RATING
9/10

COMFORT	9
WEIGHT	8
STYLE	9
VALUE FOR MONEY	8

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German company Touratech is a household name among adventure bikers and any piece of kit bearing its logo comes with high expectations. The Aventuro Traveller mostly lives up to this, although at £590.91, you'll pay for the quality.

At this stage, it's worth pointing out that Touratech collaborated with Portuguese brand Nexx Helmets in the design and manufacture of the lid which is heavily based on Nexx's own X.Villjord flip-front.

Straight out of the box, it's clear the Aventuro Traveller is built to a high standard, although at 1,810g, it is heavy and certainly doesn't have the same lightweight feel of the Klim or AGV helmets on test. It does, however, feel reassuringly substantial with a quality fit and finish. Immediately noticeable is the adventure-style peak, but apart from this, the helmet looks and performs very much like a dedicated road lid, hence its inclusion in this group test. That peak is well designed, it didn't catch the wind unexpectedly, and proved an asset with the sun so low in the sky at this time of year.

The Aventuro Traveller is dual-homologated, although riding with the chin bar up did an



ABR RATING
7/10

COMFORT	7
WEIGHT	6
STYLE	8
VALUE FOR MONEY	7

uncomfortable amount of weight on the back of my neck. With the chin bar down, the helmet provides a comfortable and reassuringly snug fit with plush inner padding (removable for washing) which features a Coolmax liner to wick away sweat. The chin, brow, and exhaust vents provided a huge amount of airflow although the brow vent was a little tricky to operate because it is partially covered by the peak.

The Pinlock-ready visor (in the box) gave plenty of vision of the road ahead and could be set in

four positions. Once the visor was closed, the Aventuro Traveller Carbon proved comfortably quiet at motorway speeds. However, during a long-distance ride in the rain, a lot of water leaked inside and ran down the inside of the visor, despite the vents being closed, obscuring my vision and forcing me to pull over to wipe it multiple times. **JO**

IN A LINE: A comfortable yet heavy helmet but visor leakage was a big problem.

AGV SPORT MODULAR

£599.99

WWW.AGV.CO.UK

Founded in 1947, AGV's long history is intertwined with motorcycle racing.

Some of the world's greatest riders have sported its helmets on track including superstars Giacomo Agostini and Valentino Rossi. It comes as no surprise then that AGV's entry into this group test has a sporty feel thanks to its aerodynamic design, adjustable spoiler, and racing stripes colourway.

Straight out of the box, it's clear the sport modular is a quality piece of kit. The fit and finish is excellent, and at 1,314g, the featherweight AGV is supremely light for a flip front. You don't realise how liberating it is to wear such a lightweight lid until you go for a spin and almost feel like you're riding helmet free.

Inside, the plush padded lining provides good levels of comfort and support, and the Pinlock-ready visor (in the box) gave plenty of vision of the road ahead. However, the visor release button was fiddly to use while wearing gloves. I had no such qualms with the chin bar release, but be aware the helmet was not designed to be ridden with the chin bar raised.

I was pleased to see the AGV Sports Modular utilise a good old-fashioned double D-ring



ABR RATING
8/10

COMFORT	7
WEIGHT	10
STYLE	8
VALUE FOR MONEY	7

fastener, a design which offers more strength than the ratchet strap alternative found in many helmets. The chin and brow vents provided adequate airflow, although try as I might, I couldn't feel any difference between the two adjustable rear spoiler exhaust settings.

Overall, I was impressed with the quality and comfort of the Sport Modular but there was one glaring issue in the fact it wasn't long enough for my head. Let me explain. The helmet is so compact that my chin was pressed against

the inside of the chin bar and the drop-down sunshield hit my nose. This isn't something I've experienced with a helmet in the correct size before. Clearly, the Sport Modular isn't designed to suit my particular head (or nose) shape, so I'd recommend you try before you buy what is otherwise a very good flip-front helmet. **JO**

IN A LINE: Super lightweight and compact, a little too compact for my liking



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WWW.KLIM.COM

ABR RATING
9/10

COMFORT	9
WEIGHT	8
STYLE	9
VALUE FOR MONEY	8

American company Klim produces some of the most sought-after adventure motorcycling gear in the world. Premium products like the Badlands Pro jacket and the Krios Pro helmet are wish list items for plenty of dual-sport riders who spend their time ripping up the trails. However, in this group test we're looking at Klim's new road touring helmet, the TK1200 Karbon, which the company says has 'revolutionised' modular helmet design'.

In terms of styling, the TK1200 doesn't look particularly revolutionary but it's a very good-looking lid all the same with an understated black, grey, and red colour scheme. However, there are two things that make it stand out from the crowd immediately. At 1,512g, the TK1200 is one of the lightest helmets on test

thanks to a full carbon fibre shell, and at £638.39, it is also the most expensive.

As you'd expect from a helmet at this price point, the fit and finish is very good. There are no unwelcome rattles and the chin bar locks into place with a reassuringly crisp click in both the up and down positions, although you do need to exert some force to pull it down. Keep in mind the helmet isn't dual homologated which means it wasn't designed to ridden with the chin bar raised.

Inside, the moisture wicking, removable inner padding is comfortable but there is less of it compared to other helmets on test, in part because there is no inner padding around the ears. I enjoyed the airy feeling it gave, although it did contribute to the helmet being a little noisy at motorway speeds.

Despite this, the TK1200 is a pleasure to wear thanks to its light weight and excellent balance. Motorcycling is a liberating experience but wearing a helmet as light as the TK1200 made it even more so.

Another standout feature is the Transitions visor which adapts to changing light conditions, negating the need for a drop-down sun shield. It's clever stuff and worked superbly the majority of the time, including at night, although the world did appear slightly darker than I would have liked on cloudy days. Klim also include a Pinlock in the box. **JO**

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READERS EXPOSED

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■ FIRST BIKE?

Suzuki VanVan 125

■ CURRENT BIKE?

Suzuki Vanvan 125, Suzuki V-Strom DL650XT, and a Yamaha WR250R

■ DREAM BIKE?

I don't really have a dream bike as I love my current motorcycle. However, before embarking on an around-the-world trip on my WR250R, I'll be selling my DL650 for funds. On returning, I'd like to upgrade to a V-Strom DL1000 or a Triumph Tiger 800 for my road-based escapades.

■ MOST EXPENSIVE MOTORCYCLE ACCESSORY YOU'VE EVER BOUGHT?

A Giant Loop Great Basin bag, which is fantastic might I add.

■ MOUNTAIN PASSES OR DESERT PISTES?

I haven't been to a desert yet and I'm quite scared of riding on sand to be honest, so I would have to say mountain passes. I toured around Switzerland and a bit of Italy this summer and absolutely loved the mountains. I can't wait to go back.

■ TENT OR HOTEL?

Tent always. Sometimes I put the tent up in the garden as I sleep so much better than inside or in a bed, bizarrely.

■ LIFELONG AMBITION?

To successfully ride around the world and have a life filled with adventure. Hopefully, I'll encourage a few others to get into adventure motorcycling and promote mental health awareness while doing so.

■ MOST DANGEROUS MOTORCYCLING MOMENT?

Owning and riding a particularly temperamental Royal Enfield Himalayan and not knowing if it would cut out whenever I went into a corner or stopped, although it did get me through my A2 test so it wasn't entirely bad.

■ MOST MEMORABLE MOTORCYCLING MOMENT?

Going through France, Belgium, around Switzerland, and a bit of Italy solo during the COVID-19 pandemic after having only ridden for just over a year. And, having struggled with bad anxiety where I wouldn't leave the house in the past,

this showed me how much travelling by bike can help my mental health issues and it has pushed me to get out and see the world more. Keep up with my travels and stories on Instagram @jaderides.

■ WHAT DO YOU MISS MOST WHEN TRAVELLING?

My three beautiful dogs and my boyfriend if he's not with me.

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

I'd meet Elspeth Beard and ask her for any advice she has on travelling around the world and how things have changed since she went on her first big trip.

■ FAVOURITE CRAP JOKE?

What do you call a fear of giants? Feefiphobia. **ABR**

If you want to be a reader exposed in a future issue of **Adventure Bike Rider**, email james@adventurebikerider.com and if we feature you you'll get a free year's subscription to the mag. You can't say fairer than that, eh?

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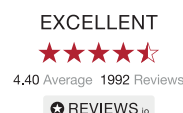
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