

A red motorcycle is shown from a low-angle, rear-quarter perspective, positioned on the right side of the frame. The motorcycle's rear wheel, a red fuel tank, and a black saddlebag are visible. The road is paved and has a double yellow line running down the center, receding into the distance. The background features a landscape with green and yellow shrubs, a few trees, and a cloudy sky with patches of blue. The overall scene conveys a sense of motion and adventure.

Planning your own motorcycle adventure

A brief guide...

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Running Towards the Light*

Which bike?

The dreaded question that most people agonise over. Also, to an extent, the most important, because you're going to spend a lot of time on the bike and you want to make sure you're happy with it. The three most important things to consider when choosing a bike for a trip are; do you feel comfortable on it, is it reliable, and are you able to fix it along the way? Confidence in your bike is therefore crucial, though equally, some people, such as Henry Nottage, prefer a bike that breaks down quite a lot (he rode a Metisse to Nepal) as it meant he got to meet people and spend some time in various locations along the way. Above all else then, you pick the most suitable bike for you and your trip, and try not to take any notice of what anyone else has to say.

If you were to draw up a list of twelve obvious contenders you might come up with a few of these....

Suzuki DRZ400
Honda Africa Twin
KTM 690
Royal Enfield 350 or 500cc
Honda Transalp
BMW F800
BMW 650 Dakar
Kawasaki KLR 650
Triumph Tiger
V-Strom 650
Honda C90
Yamaha XT 660 Tenere

None of these bikes cost a fortune. In fact, at least half of them can be bought for as little as £2,000 or less. As we see in some of the stories in this brief guide, you don't need an expensive bike to go around the world or on big adventure. Graham Field has done many miles on his £700 Kawasaki KLR 650, Claire Elsdon rode down to South Africa on her six year old Suzuki DRZ400 and Sean Dillion has done almost 35,000 miles on his C90, riding it from Alaska to Argentina, and who is now coming up through Africa on his way back to England.

Again, the key things to stress are that you need a bike that you can rely on, that you know will start, and which you enjoy riding.

Big vs small

You don't need a big bike to go on a big trip. As has been proven many times by many different people, a small bike can take you just as far as a big bike. The important part is how far you're prepared to compromise, because certainly, a small bike isn't for everyone. Their benefit is that they allow you to travel cheaply. Fuel economy is exceptional. They're also cheaper to ship and fly across borders, the Carnet costs are less, spares are often easier to come by and you tend to blend in or at the very least look less rich than if riding a more expensive and sizeable machine. The downside is that they're slow, sometimes uncomfortable and not as able to carry as much gear. Two up on one is also a chore, if not impossible. The compromise is perhaps somewhere in the middle. A 650cc for example.

How far can I ride in a day?

The question of how far you can ride in a day is a personal one. Some (see Nick Sanders) can spend almost 24 hours a day in the saddle if they need to. Others can manage only a few hours, covering just a few hundred miles and being happy with that. The best advice is to be realistic. Don't think that because you cruise at say 50mph you're going to cover fifty miles every hour, because with fuel stops, food stops and photo stops you're looking at much less, perhaps half your actual cruising pace. If you set yourself too unrealistic targets you're also putting a lot of pressure on your riding, and that's when accidents happen. Be ambitious, but be realistic with it. Where you're riding also plays a large part in how far you can travel. Riding European and North America interstates and you can really motor, making 600 miles a day a reality. Take the back roads or mix in some off-road sections and the distance you can cover greatly decreases. The last piece of advice, don't think you can do massive miles straight off the bat. Start small and build up to it over time.

How much money will I need?

Same as how long is a piece of string. You need as much as you've got and you've got as much as you need. Budget travel in developing countries of the world can get your daily budget down to less than £10, and that's for food, fuel and accommodation. Even America can be travelled on perhaps only double that, such is the affordability of food and fuel. The big cost in North America and of course Europe is accommodation. This can quadruple daily costs. Save money by camping. Save even more money by wild camping (see Paul Pitchfork's guide). The real cost however doesn't come in the day to day cost. It comes

more in the logistics and documentation. Take my own trip from Sydney to London. I was on the road for 269 days, which at an average of £10 per day works out to a reasonable £3,000, even if we round it up. But then you start looking at the other stuff.

Carnet cost £600

Shipping from Darwin to Timor £300

Mandatory guide through China £1200

All the other visas, circa £250

Shipping from Indonesia to Malaysia £70

Bike cost £1,000

Flight over Burma £400

Visa for Pakistan £80

Spares and repairs £300

Ferry Calais to Dover £50

And then all those invisible costs that eat into your budget, meaning that trip from Sydney to London cost around £8,000 in total. The key lesson is that there will always be unforeseen costs and the trip will cost you more than you think. Travellers find various means of paying for their trips. Some remortgage their houses, others save for many years, use inheritance money, load up the credit cards. Very few people I've met have actually been able to 'afford' the trips that they're on.

How Daniel Rintz funded his trip

One great case study of how someone funded their adventure is Daniel Rintz, who rode half way around the world on the money he made along the way. He was a computer programmer, so was able to pick up freelance work and complete it via satellite on route, stopping every now and again to raise money for the next leg of the trip. Daniel has made a documentary about this trip. You can find out more at www.open-explorers.com



To plan or not to plan, that is the question

There are two schools of thought here. The first is the spontaneous, 'just go' brigade, hit the road and figure it out along the way. This really only works if you know the basics of where you're going and how you're going to get there. Knowing for example what the visa situation is in the various countries or which countries you can't go through. What you leave to chance is the rest of it; where you're going to head, when you're going to get there, where you're going to sleep, eat and live. You basically step into the world and go with the flow. This obviously takes a bit of nerve and also a bit of practice as you're first instinct is to lay down a plan and stick to it. The problem with over planning is that you can spend most of the time trying to stick to a rigid plan rather than actually enjoying the adventure and going with the flow of it. Alternatively, for those who like to plan it can bring a certain calm to the experience, especially if there's been plenty of research done on the tourist attractions and towns you might be passing through. Most of all, do what feels right to you and ultimately trust your instinct, it's more often than not correct.

Where do I find fuel?

Wherever there is civilisation there is fuel. It's everywhere these days, even if you have to get it on the black market or from bottles sold by the roadside. The crucial thing is to know your range and not go beyond it. Having fuel in reserve is also a good idea, and if riding through the wilderness never pass a fuel stop without topping up. Most bikes can manage a range of 200 miles, and in most parts of the world that's more than plenty.

How do I know where I'm going?

Navigating is obviously essential on a trip through a part of the world you're unfamiliar with, whether it be in Europe, America or Asia. Satellite navigation has made things much easier, with mapping available for most parts of the world. If you can, try and resort back to old school maps every now and again, even asking locals for directions. As a means of engaging with the environment and the people this is so much better than sat-nav. And even if you don't speak the local language it'll often surprise you just how much information you can get from someone through use of hand signals and map pointing. On my own travels the hardest place to navigate was America, simply because of the number of roads to take. In places like India and Indonesia there are very few roads, relatively speaking, making navigation easier than you might think.

What if I get into trouble?

The best advice is to try not to get into trouble in the first place. You do this by constantly being aware of your surroundings and not acting or going beyond your own abilities (unless absolutely necessary). Once again trust your instinct and follow your intuition. The chances of getting into trouble with other human beings is relatively slim. The reality is that most incidents occur on the roads with other traffic, with it important to remember that you're often a long way from help or a hospital. Staying upright and in one piece is therefore imperative. This is the danger of group riding, where it's easier to get distracted and quicken the pace.

One consideration is a satellite tracking device such as a SPOT. These devices relay your location to a website that friends and family back home can follow. Some of these devices even have emergency SOS buttons you can press in order to notify the local rescue services of your predicament, and location. Obviously, the effectiveness of this depends on what country you're in. Activate it in North America and chances are you'll get rescued. Press SOS in Indonesia and there's less chance of someone coming to assist. Some riders take good old fashioned air horns, as these are much more effective at alerting the local population to your predicament.

Crossing borders?

If you take your adventure beyond England then it's a fair chance you're going to at some point have to cross a border. These are often the most problematic parts of many adventures. The first advice is to know if you need a visa beforehand or if you can get one on arrival. You can find this out by looking on the relevant embassy website. Also find out what other documents you might need, whether it be a letter of invitation, a valid insurance document or a Carnet. Try and speak to or read about recent experiences of other travellers. The situation at borders can change so frequently you really must seek out the most up to date information. Go prepared, that's the main thing. The best advice is also to be patient. There's no point getting wound up by delays or queues. The border guards hold all the power. You are at their mercy. Do what they say, be polite and courteous, though if need be, stand your ground.

Borders can also be a source of corruption, with it not unheard of in various parts of the world to be asked for money in order to let you through, or process your documentation etc. These are pretty much always unjust, and they only get asked for because they have been paid

by other travellers in the past. Again, stand your ground if need be but most of all be prepared to be patient. There is nothing a border guard likes less than a traveller in no hurry. If you can sit them out for a few hours or even all day until they get fed up and let you through then that's the best tactic. Most border guards know when to get give up. But again, use your intuition and instinct. Sometimes you have no choice but to hand over some money. Ultimately, you're end goal is to cross the border. Do so as wisely and as cost free as you can. The rest is just plain old good luck and persuasion.

What do I ride in?

You can buy all sorts of adventurous garments these days, often textile with protection in the vulnerable areas, too many pockets to mention and colours that can at times make you look a bit of a wally. You either like these, or you don't. The best bet is to ride in what you feel most comfortable in. From Sydney to London I rode in shorts and a t-shirt because I was riding at less than 40mph and the weather was hot. It wasn't reckless, it was just what felt right. Equally, Bruce Smart rode around the world in a full set of racing leathers, just because that's what felt right to him.

The most crucial factor in any garment choice is waterproofing and warmth. If you can stay warm and dry then you're half way there. Get wet and be sleeping in a tent at night with no where to dry your clothes and you're in for a miserable time. A cheap cagoule is as good as any fancy textile. Likewise, carrying spare gloves is also a good thing. Lastly, be realistic that whatever you wear you're likely to need to replace and repair along the way, especially on a longer trip and whatever you do try not to get too attached to your gear because there is good chance of it being ruined or lost.

On your own or with others?

Some people won't travel unless they can travel with others. Others won't travel unless they can travel alone. If you're someone who doesn't like their own company, needs people around them and feels down without a lot of human interaction then probably you're best finding someone to go with. The road can be a lonely place. You meet people, but you never really have company. You have to be comfortable with your own company for hour upon hour each day. The hard part of travelling with another person or with a group is finding people/persons you can travel well with.

Many a trip has been ruined or compromised by the deterioration of relationships and friendships on the road. Do not underestimate how important it is to get along and know fully the people you're travelling with. The benefits of group travel however are that you can share costs, such as accommodation, shipping, and the costs of guides in the countries that require them. You can also watch each other's back and there's the old argument of safety in numbers. Alternatively, being in a group reduces your likelihood of interacting with other people. People are also less likely to talk to you. When you travel alone people seem to see less threat in you and as a result are more open. The downside is that if things go wrong then you are on your own.

Organised tours

Contrary to what some believe there's nothing wrong with paying someone to take care of all the planning and logistics, allowing you as the rider to simply fly in and fly out. For those who are money rich time poor they can definitely maximise what you get to see and do in the short holiday time that you have. The tours often include bike hire, a support vehicle and a guide. If anything goes wrong there is always someone else there to sort it. If you like riding in a group but have no one to ride with then they also help with that as there can be up to 20 other riders, especially on some of the Indian tours. Other popular tours are those that take in Route 66, South America and there are even companies such as Globebusters that you can pay to take you around the world. The cost of being led compared to doing it yourself is obviously much higher, and for those who like the idea of being self sufficient then guided tours are perhaps not for you. But if nothing else, an organised tour can be a great way of learning the basics and feeling familiar with life on the road before embarking on your own solo adventure.

Open faced or full face helmet?

Much like clothing, this comes down to personal taste, though perhaps also relevant is the speed you're going to be riding at. A fast blast through Europe and there's no doubt a full face helmet is a better option. A more slower lope off the beaten track and an open face helmet allows you to experience the world more openly. It also allows for more easier engagement with the locals as you're face is not hidden behind a helmet. It's surprising just what a calming effect a smiling open face can have in a middle of nowhere town or village.

Where do I sleep?

Where you sleep on any adventure is down to so many things; budget, location, preference, and is likely to be a mixture of various options, from campsites to hotels, to hostels, local guesthouses and even with locals themselves. It's certainly not uncommon for people travelling in random parts of the world to be invited in by complete strangers and offered a bed for the night, or even for the week. Budget is obviously the biggest factor, but even if you wanted to and could afford to stay in the Ritz whilst travelling across Mongolia you'd be hard pressed to find one. That's why sometimes, and more often than not, you just have to make do with what you've got.

The next question is whether you plan on where you're going to sleep or just figure it out as you go along. If it's a trip into Europe you're planning then it works just as well either ways. Pre booking gives you somewhere to aim towards, whilst playing it by ear isn't a problem as in western Europe and in other developed parts of the world, there are usually plenty of hotels and other accommodation providers around. Same goes with campsites. Plan ahead or play it by ear. It depends on what kind of person you are and whether you like to have it all mapped out or play it a bit more casual. The worst part of an unplanned approach is the evening time when you start looking for someone to sleep and can't find anywhere. This can get frustrating and unnerving.

What camping gear?

You just need the basics; a decent free-standing tent, comfortable roll matt, sleeping bag rated to the climate you're travelling to (synthetic arguably preferable to down as it dries quicker), then basic stove and utensils. You don't need the best gear on the market; just stuff that's up to the job. Army surplus store is as good a place as any to start.

Wild camping

Wild camping is where you simply put your tent up on a non-designated site, pay no money and be off the next morning. This takes practice and perseverance. The trick is to find somewhere well out of sight, where you won't be interrupted in the night and where you feel safe. There are risks in this, but there are also many gains. It saves you money for a start, but also very rarely are there campsites in the best camping spots. Wild camp sites gives you access to some of the most amazing views and isolation, if that's what you're looking for.

Road side camping - *A soldier's perspective*



Paul Pitchfork spent 18 years serving in the British Army and is now enjoying his freedom, exploring South America on his motorbike. Here he gives us his top tips of staying safe whilst camping in the wild...

The key principle I employ when camping by the road is simple: if the threat can't

find you, it can't pose a danger to you. Animals which pose a credible threat to humans camping are few and far between. So what we are really talking about are people, and even then I don't see that threat as significant - petty, opportunistic theft most likely, or at worst a drunken night time mugging. So rule number one - when roadside camping, don't camp beside the road!

I will never camp beside a road with any volume of traffic using it. I will either find a quiet side road and head down that until I locate a secluded spot, or I will break off the road and cross open ground until I'm distanced from the traffic. The key is finding some cover - a small copse, the reverse side of a hill, a fold in the ground. I'll then park up and check for any other approaches that may lead people towards my tent - a track or path coming from the other direction, for example. I'll confirm my escape route (necessary in only the worst case scenario an inevitably meaning leaving your tent behind) and park the bike facing in the right direction.

Night provides cover and is your friend. By setting up camp at dusk, you are minimising the amount of time during which you can be seen. Don't use too much white light - a red filtered light is much more discreet. After dark I walk back towards the road with my torch and check if car headlights will pick up the reflectors on my bike and my panniers. If so, I cover them up. If I need to use white light during the evening, I'll turn it off momentarily when cars pass along the road. By employing these tactics you can remain hidden at night, even when you are close to the road.

People on foot are the ones more able to spot you (and hear you). So stay away from villages and habitation. I've been surprised by locals' night time habits; I seen folk out late at night wandering back from one village to another across the fields, and shepherds are routinely up and about long before you are.

Ultimately, only you can choose the level of risk you want to take. And no doubt in some parts of the world the risk may be higher. But don't see shadows where they don't exist. With a bit of common sense and by following the golden rule - if the threat can't find you, it can't harm you - camping 'by the road' is a pretty safe affair.

Follow Paul's travels at www.horcamoto.com/author/paulpitchfork

What documentation?

Documentation can and often is a nightmare, probably the main part of what dissuades people from doing their trips. Starting out it feels like a bit of a minefield, with horizonsunlimited.com and Chris Scott's Adventure Bike Handbook great places to start.

Visas

Most countries outside of western Europe you need a visa for; including Russia, Turkey and America. Each country is different. Some you get at the borders, others you have to apply for in advance. Some need what's called a Letter of Introduction, others a letter of non-objection from your own embassy. Some countries won't issue visas at all depending on the political situation at the time. It is then a constantly evolving playing field and being up to date with your information is crucial. The best place to start is the website of the country in questions' embassy. Here you'll find all if not most of the information you need. It's then a case of jumping through the right hoops to get it.

One option to help things along is to use a visa agency. This involves you sending them your passport, letting them know which visas you need and they go ahead and sort it all out for you, at a sizeable cost of course. Cost aside, a visa agency can be quite useful when trying to access a country with tricky entry requirements as they know the score and the best way of dealing with the application.

Health insurance

It's imperative that you have decent health insurance that has no limitations on engine size or 'overlanding,' which is what some insurers define long distance motorcycling as. The best always is to speak to someone in person and have written confirmation of your notification of your intent. One insurer I've used and relied on is Navigator Travel, with the guy there, Richard, well informed on the realities of overland travel and the level of coverage needed. Policies are also reasonably priced. One thing to bear in mind is that any insurance cover you do have is null and void whenever travelling through a country the FOC advises against travel to. This is a bit of a grey area as it's felt unlikely that an insurer would leave you high and dry, but it's certainly something to be weary of.

Carnet de Passage

A Carnet is a bit like a passport for your bike. You have it stamped when you enter a country and again when you leave. It's to prevent you from selling or disposing of the bike and effectively ensures you're going to return home with it. You don't need one for all the countries of the world, but you will need one for parts of Central and South East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and parts of Africa. That you don't need one for the Americas is what makes that continent so popular.

The costs of a Carnet are quite high, with the fee calculated using quite a complicated system based on the value of the bike and the countries you intend on riding through, as some, like Egypt, have higher 'risks' than others. To take a £10,000 bike through Egypt for example you're going to have to put a deposit down of £9,045 and expect to get only £4,590 of that back. It's for this reason people choose cheaper bikes for their journeys, as the cost of the more expensive bikes makes it just too expensive.

The Carnet is administered in the UK by the RAC, with all applications needing to go through them. For a full break down of the process and costs, see their website www.rac.co.uk/travel/driving-abroad/carnet-de-passage.

Do I really want to go?

This is the million dollar question. Many people have thoughts of taking off and doing the bigger trip; almost as many find sufficient reason why they can't or won't go. It all boils down to motivation, desire and intent. None of these adventures happen without some compromise, often ones that have long lasting effect. Despite what some might claim, these bigger trips

aren't always easy, they're not always fun or glamorous. They are just as often lonely, uncomfortable and dull. You have to take the rough with the smooth and understand that often on these trips you'd much rather be at home with your feet up drinking a cup of tea, not in a tent on a rainy night in the middle of Kazakhstan. Wanting to do a trip is one thing; needing to do a trip is another. Equally, don't be too despondent if you never end up doing that big trip. It just means you have more important things going on in your life, which is not always a bad thing.

Where to start?

For those still keen, the first place to start is with a bike, a destination and a motive. Equally, you don't have to ride around the world to have a big adventure. If you've never ridden beyond your own county then a trip to the coast can be a big thing. Equally, to those uninitiated, a weekend in Scotland can seem big and bewildering; a trip into Europe a distant dream. Keep it manageable then, don't over do it, most of all start out by going somewhere you're going to enjoy. Decide whether you want to go alone or with others, whether you're going to camp or stay in a hotel, whether you're going to book or play it by ear. Again, think of riding distance and how far you want or are prepared to travel in a day. Think about your route beforehand. Do you want to take the main roads or explore the back roads? Do you need sat-nav or what about a map in the tankbag? Is there an event you're heading towards, what about going to visit a friend and using them as an excuse for travelling further than you usually would? What about waking up one Saturday morning and hitting the road with no real plan? Having a bike that is well maintained and that you have faith in is the crucial thing. A bike you know will start and finish every ride (within reason) is a godsend. Trust your machinery and it'll take you as far as you wish it to go.

Where to finish?

That one big trip; that's all it'll be. No need to go again and again. But be prepared, because once you've ventured and discovered how relatively easy and cost effective it is then there will always be other destinations and journeys on the horizon. That one big trip is never enough. The second trip is only a prelude to the third, and so on. The trick is managing the time away from the road and not becoming too despondent. The easy thing to let happen is to get into a routine of going, coming back, feeling the need to go again, and so on and so forth, much like any drug. You'll certainly feel restless after your first adventure, next time you'll want to travel further and harder, but that's just the nature of the beast.

Luggage

When it comes to luggage for a motorbike trip there is an endless amount of choice, from hard panniers to soft panniers to top boxes and tank bags. Many people assume that the more storage space the better, but that's not often the case, because if you have the space, then you'll fill it, with lots of stuff you don't actually need. The best advice is to go slightly smaller than what you think you'll need, then refine your pack to suit.

Hard panniers

Hard panniers are increasingly popular. They are secure, sturdy and in most cases waterproof. Buy a good set of panniers and they can withstand a heavy drop and keep the weight of the bike off your legs, preventing injury, something that is essential if travelling solo. You can pay as little as around £400 for a set of panniers, up to almost £1,500. The difference in price often equates to extra features and functionality. Some panniers are more suited to heavy duty usage than others. The Givi Trekker and the SW Motech for example are more casual panniers, for use in domestic markets. They are perfectly adequate, but are less likely to withstand an impact than Metal Mules, Touratech, ARD Cases, Jesse, Bumot or Stahlkoffer panniers.

Most of these panniers are made from 2mm aluminium and are either welded or pot-riveted. Arguments rage over which is best. Rivets can work loose and rattle, welds can be difficult to fix out in the wild. Another consideration is whether you want the panniers to be easily removed or more secure. If you intend on staying in hotels and want to take the panniers in with you every night then the quick release system of the Metal Mules, Givi or the new Zega Pro2s make for an easy life. If you plan on camping and therefore don't need to take them off quite so often then all of the others will do the job. None are what you call difficult to remove, but often you have to take off the lids, remove some of your gear to get to the interior release mechanism. One option is to use pannier liners. These are something most



pannier makers offer, are made from fabric and often made to measure. Instead of the pannier, you simply lift out the liner.

Panniers often come in different volumes. The side with the exhaust on is often slimmer than the side without. This is to keep dimensions equal either side. Some manufactures such as Jesse mould their panniers to fit around the exhaust, others, such as Metal Mule, offer after-market silencers designed to allow more room for a balanced pannier set. At the other end of the spectrum, for those on a budget, ammo cans from the army surplus store have often been used as effective panniers.

Soft panniers

These are arguably less popular, especially on the bigger adventure bikes, but are often preferred by those who venture further off the beaten track. The benefits are that they are much slimmer than hard panniers, if you fall they don't run the risk of digging in to the ground or impacting on a limb. They are also more discreet and can be easily lifted off at the end of the day and carried in to a guesthouse, especially if they are the saddle type, joined in the middle. The downside of soft panniers is that are not waterproof, can rip and aren't as secure as lockable metal panniers. That said, there are very few instances of theft from panniers outside of Western Europe.

Like metal panniers, the price of soft panniers vary greatly. Companies such as Oxford can sell you a pair for less than £100, whilst the Magadan panniers from Adventure Spec are closer to £350. One area where opinions vary is whether or not soft panniers need a frame. Often the panniers will be happy enough simply thrown over the rear saddle and secured in some way. Others prefer to sit their soft panniers in frames, or at the very least secure them to a vertical mounted plate on either side. This stops the panniers from swinging and helps prevent them getting tangled in the rear wheel, which can happen.

Top box and tank bags

A top box is a handy device for more delicate belongings such as cameras and laptops. Possibly more useful on a longer journey is a tank bag. These are relatively affordable and are useful in allowing you to keep everything valuable in front of your eye-line. It also ensures that any documents or cameras can be kept easily to hand. Ideal for when crossing borders or when wanting to get that impromptu shot.

Ten essential travelling accessories by Cliff from the Adventure Bike Shop



Cliff and Jenny run the Adventure Bike Shop over in Suffolk. They've also ridden their own big trip so have a good idea what they're on about...

1. Air Pro Puncture repair kit - it covers all the options, but don't forget to take a pump as pressurised canisters are not allowed in air freight (if they know about it!).
2. Motion Pro Trail tool because it's small and light.
3. Motion Pro 24mm T6 tyre lever (fits most bikes rear spindle, there are other sizes available).
- 4 Motion Pro T6 24mm adaptor so you have a decent leverage on those difficult nuts/bolts.
5. Add a couple more sockets to suit your bike and you have a decent tool kit, puncture kit and tyre levers.
6. Four-metre power lead that plugs into the bike so you can have light in the tent and power for your notebook/laptop.
7. Decent comfortable bed. There are loads of self-inflating options out there, but we prefer the Therm-a-Rest Neo Air All Season matt (which has a pump and is not self-inflating, just plug it into the bike and pitch your tent).
8. Thermal blanket (big sheet of tin foil!). Obviously useful if you get caught in a snowstorm in the Karakorum, but also if it's a bit chilly put it under your bed as it helps to stop the cold ground making your night's sleep restless and you stay much warmer.
9. Clothing – a decent base layer, a wicking and breathable outer layer, a decent jacket and trousers that don't leak, or wet out in the rain even if you stay dry, an outer jacket with a Gore Tex liner is only any good for rain

in the desert. If it rains the temperature usually drops, you stay dry but the jacket wets out then sucks all your body heat away. You're better off with a jacket that leaks like a sieve with a waterproof jacket over the top, or better still a laminate Gore tex jacket if you have the budget. Of course I would recommend a Klim Badlands jacket if you have the budget as it really is an excellent piece of kit, but I understand not everyone has the budget or wants to look like a Ewan and Charley clone (even if they did not wear such good kit).

10. Best item we took travelling was a Mountain Equipment light weight jacket with zip off sleeves, just shower proof (it never leaked) with a thin Polartec lining, it packed into a tiny bag and kept us warm and comfortable, cost about £130 back in 2001 so it was not a sales success and is no longer available, but a brilliant piece of kit and worth every penny (still got it and use it regularly even though it is now looking very tired).

Shipping your bike

Giles from [James Cargo](#) talks us through where's hot and where's not when considering shipping your bike overseas....



North America is always popular. A mixture of people wanting to do coast to coast, or Route 66 or Anchorage or all the way down. The Trans American Trail (TAT) is a growing area of interest as it offers the chance for proper adventure and is so accessible. It works best to fly into Atlanta and then finish at a depot in Seattle. For a bike less than 600cc - ideal for the trail - you're looking at around £2,000 in total to fly your bike out and have it boated back. We'd need seven days notice to book it in and from what we gather people are taking 8-10 weeks to do the TAT, but it can be done in three weeks. (For some great reports on the TAT see [ADVRider.com](#))

Route 66 is still popular with Harley riders. We're finding it's better for individual groups rather than the big groups. We fly the bikes into Chicago

and then ship back out of LA. For a GS bike you're looking at under £2,000 return. Most people take two to three weeks and that's doing it gently. Gentle riding makes it a great choice for the cruiser market. For those wanting some more adventurous see the TAT.

We're finding more people wanting to do **Canada**, between Halifax and Vancouver, across Canada, taking in the Great Lakes, which to ship your bike in and out you're looking at around £2,500.

South America is always popular. People commonly do loops around Buenos Aires to Bogota in Colombia, flying into one and fly out the other. So into BA down to Ushuaia then out of Bogota. BA seems less hassle than Santiago. Costs – air in and out – £3,400 to airfreight both ways for GS. People doing it to take in the Dakar Rally. The weather's more conducive. So a great winter riding destination. Brazil is a wonderful country but never ship in or out as it's a nightmare. Colombia gets wonderful feedback.

More and more people want to go across **Russia to Mongolia**, with a few people flying into the Kazakhstan capital of Almaty for around £1,250, exploring the region then riding back from there.

Australia sees a few people going there. But you want to be going for three months as you're going to be looking at £3k return. In and out by boat and that's almost two months each way, which is putting people off.

A lot of people are interested in **Turkey**. Again, they're flying out and riding back. We transport to Sofia in Bulgaria, around £700 plus VAT one way. We can transport both ways, with it a one day ride from Sofia into Istanbul, saving around 2,000 miles and a good four days of riding. Malaga is more cost effective, working out at about £650 plus VAT return. People are using it as a jumping off point for **Morocco**.

Iceland is always a place people want to go. The ferries put people off. Four days from Denmark. Four days back. A day to Denmark. Ten days alone just in travel. About £1,000 each way to transport a bike there each way. The ferry used to sail out of Aberdeen, which was much more convenient, but that has sadly stopped. There's no option to fly in either. We can do **Japan** £2,500 for air in and ship back. But you would need a Carnet.



For more information visit www.jamescargo.com

Documentation for freighting



MotoFreight can also ship to any destination and have put together a brief guide on documentation...

All countries have different documentation requirements but all will want to see your passport and registration (V5) documents and additionally may want to keep copies. Some countries will want to see proof of title or ownership.

Many countries no longer require a Carnet de Passages, but it is best to check with the RAC or your destination country's Consular website to verify which documents you will need. The USA require an exemption letter from the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) which is relatively easy to get, but needs to be applied for in advance.

Motor insurance is a must in every country. Sometimes this is available in advance and many countries will sell you insurance at the border. Bear in mind that generally the local insurance will be third party only which means that your bike itself will not be covered.

If you do your research on forums (and the more informative websites such as Horizons Unlimited) do pay attention to when the article or story was posted. What may have been true many years ago or even weeks ago may not be true when you travel. Countries' rules and regulation, as well as documentation requirements change regularly. The Home Office update their travel advisories regularly so check their website travel section when planning and again when travelling. If you travel in a country that the Home Office have an advisory against then your Travel Insurance policy may become void.

Although having the correct paperwork is your own responsibility, a freight forwarder who specialises in freighting for travellers is usually up to date with the requirements or may be prepared to research the requirements on your behalf.



For more information visit www.motofreight.com

Claire Elsdon on travelling as a solo female, through Africa on a Suzuki DRZ400



Tricky topic but occasionally as a woman you can attract the odd deviant. Managing such wrong 'uns can of course provide an unwelcome and unsavoury learning curve, but to be sure the best advice is to hone your deviant detection skills! Trust your instincts and you're likely to avoid the worst of any trouble. Personally I didn't carry any actual

weaponry to fend off any human attackers and never needed it - razor sharp wits and a killer stare got me out of bother on the rare occasions that I encountered any.

But on the positives: if like me you hadn't much of an idea about small things like, well, how the bike actually worked, how to carry out basic maintenance etc, you can guarantee the moment you stop the bike anywhere on the world with an even vaguely baffled expression on your (by now) helmetless face, you'll be counting the seconds rather than the minutes before a helpful stranger approaches with just the right advice - a great way of learning these skills and meeting friendly new folk - top score!

Likewise: on the positive front, travelling through an Arab country as a woman can bring mixed experiences. On the positive front, unlike the two German men I'd teamed up with in Damietta, I was invited into the home of an Egyptian guy we'd met so that I could meet one of his wives as well as two of his children. Having not seen any women in public for ages it was really special and a real honour to be invited into the home to meet these otherwise invisible people in society, plus it was amazing to see this usually alphamale turn into a puppydog in front of my very eyes the minute he got home - it was very clear who wore the trousers in that house (as in many others in Egypt, I understand!).

The other thing I really loved in sub-saharan Africa was meeting women going about their ordinary business and seeing how their expressions changed when they saw that I was a woman! Screeches of laughter and affectionate pats on my shoulder were commonplace, as well as nods of encouragement and kind words like "very brave" really made my day, especially when the day had been tough going. Sisterhood is alive and

well out there! What I loved though was that it wasn't all "take" from my side - one woman in Kenya said to me that, when she found out I'd ridden my motorbike alone all the way from UK to Isiolo (where I met her), she now believed that anything was possible. It felt brilliant that my haphazard adventuring across a few continents could inspire women like her and I was really happy to have been able to give that back.

Spare Kit - things I wouldn't leave home without:

A bottle of engine oil/spray grease

Leatherman/pocket knife

Cable ties

Elastic bands

Screwdrivers with multiple heads

Spare lengths of fuel hosing

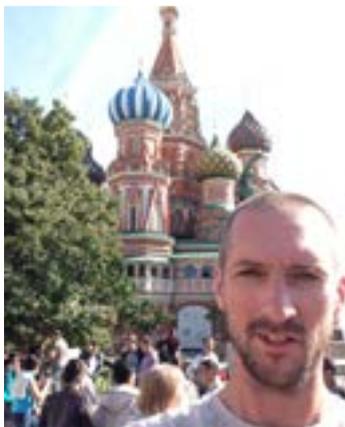
And on where female adventurers go to the loo...

Top of the list: loo troubles. Its not easy being female and needing the loo, especially in Africa; however remote a spot you pick to answer nature's call, you are BOUND to be discovered pre-pee by some curious kids, who have an amazing knack for appearing out of nowhere! I once remember a particularly excruciating journey from Gondar to Lalibela in Ethiopia with exactly that problem....that day's ride doesn't bear thinking about!



Visit www.clairegoesbikeabout.com to find out more.

Kevin Turner (to Russia on a Kawasaki ZX6) on why you don't need to ride around the world to have a big adventure...



There's a consensus among a lot of bikers that a motorcycle adventure means ditching your job, selling your house and waving goodbye to your friends and family for a minimum of six months (12 if you don't want to be laughed at in the pub when you get back).

That's a big ask for most of us and it can engender a sense of 'why bother – if I can't head off for half a year then there's no point heading off at all'. Trust me, heading off for half a day is better than not heading off at all and if you can stretch that to a couple of weeks, or a month tops, you can squeeze in the adventure of a lifetime and not have to worry about speed-dating or couch-surfing when you return.

Last year I put some new boots on my Ninja, strapped on a tent and a few days later found myself staring in wide-eyed disbelief at the beauty of the Norwegian fjords. A few more long days in the saddle and I was getting shouted out by angry Russian border guards before bouncing along the M10 towards the scarlet walls of the Kremlin. In the meantime I'd seen raging waterfalls, ridden mountain paths, battled Russian convoys and met a load of nice people, and my adventure wasn't even halfway through. I rode on through Sweden and Finland, stopped off at St Petersburg, cried myself to Moscow, then came home via Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. 6,000 miles, three weeks and the adventure of a lifetime.

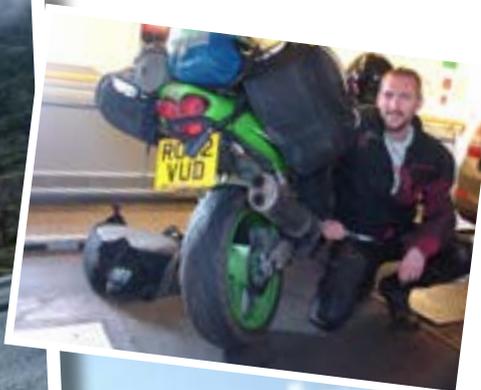
Of course, I had to cut a few corners along the way and 300-mile days were fairly common, but isn't that the point of a motorcycle adventure, to get out there and ride? Two weeks will get you to Norway, North Africa, Greece or Russia and back if you don't mind pushing on a little, or you



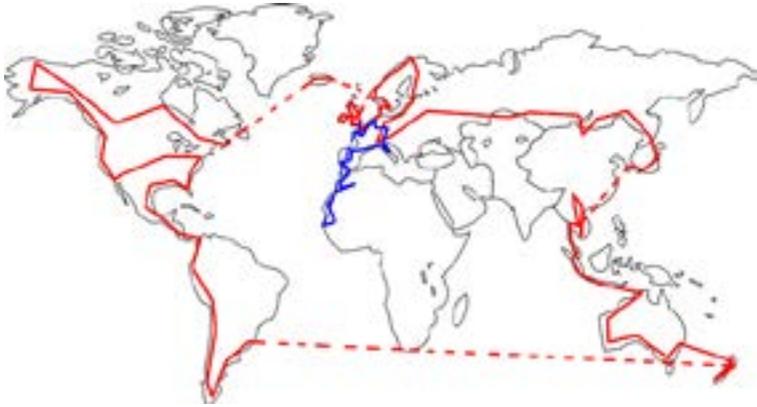
can ride around France, Germany, Italy or Spain and have an equally wonderful time. Heck, a week in the Scottish Highlands can be just as rewarding as two months in Vietnam, albeit for different reasons. The truth is, no-one can put a time limit on a personal adventure; even a long weekend on the south coast is going to leave you with better memories than staying at home and reading about somebody else doing it.

So don't be put off from travelling because you can't indulge that epic fantasy so many of us dream about. All you really need is a reliable bike, a cheap tent and a spare fortnight; you'll find adventure wherever you look for it and it'll last just as long as you want it to.

Visit www.haplessbiker.com to find out more



Bruce Smart (around the world on a Suzuki GSX1000) on choosing the perfect adventure bike...



From the second I decided I was going around the world I only had one bike in mind, a Suzuki GSX-R1000. For me it was perfect, I knew how it rode, I knew how it felt & sounded when running well - and more importantly when it wasn't well, it was reliable, and believe it or not I was comfortable on it.

You see bike choice should be personal, not driven by marketing and hype. Whatever bike you are comfortable on, whatever bike you like, but most importantly whatever bike makes you SMILE, is the right bike for you to take. At the end of the day, you're going to be spending prolonged periods sat in the saddle, at times standing, pushing it, lifting it, even kicking it, so just take what you enjoy riding.

My Gixxer took everything the world could throw at it, deserts, rocks, mud, Tarmac, floods, blizzards, extreme hot and cold, she put up with it all. If I did the trip again I'd have no qualms in taking the same type of bike, and it makes me grin each and every time I swing a leg over her.

The only issue I had was the subframe. I went through three different Suzuki OEM sub frames and broke them four times in exactly the same place. The material is machined too thin, not just for extreme riding like you'd expect, I even snapped one on the M1 heading up to Donington for track day? (Maybe it was just my fat arse? Naahhhh). To get round that, I got an after-market subframe made up my a stunt company and didn't have a single issue after that.

A sports bike may not strike you as much of a carriage mule, but you just need to be a bit adaptable with how and where you put stuff. I ended up bungeeing my tent across the front of the bike, utilising a cargo net to also carry water, a hand held GoPro, tracker and whatever else I needed to hand that day. A tank bag held all the heavy kit like tools, and clothing, fuel cans, sleeping bag etc went on the back. I also had a rucksack which held my MacBook for vid and blog editing. Job done.

My biggest bit of advice regarding kit is this: get everything you want to take together, pack it and get it on the bike. Then unpack it and half it, pop it back on the bike and go for a long ride. The only way you'll know if you need, or don't need something, is by being on the road. I left with a ridiculous amount of kit and ended up ditching over half of it as I went across Russia. Take the bare minimum as there are shops everywhere so you'll generally be able to buy whatever you need on the road. At the very least you'll be able to get it sent to you.

Above all, if you want to do a trip, just go for it and do it. The hardest part is just leaving, once you're on the road its just a case of going with the flow and dealing with whatever comes your way. Enjoy it, I'm jealous already ;-)

To find out more about Bruce's trip visit www.teapotone.com



Graham Field, author of 'In *Search of Greener Grass* and new book 'Ureka' on the top ten things he's learnt over the years of travelling...



1. The **garage preparation** for me is a time of excitement and creativity, almost in a meditational state I refer to check lists as I locate luggage, spare parts and tools. A little ingenuity can result in a lot of satisfaction. I make a note of the tools I use as I prepare and

taking those ones with me means I can repair, relocate and reinforce on the side of the road if I have to. Using my bikes now comprehensive tool kit during the preparation is a good way to see what is needed and what is not. Duct tape and cable ties are essentials in every walk of life I think, not just on the road. (I'll leave the big hammer at home and hope I can find a rock when I need heavy impact)

2. Some people curse the site, but before a trip **eBay** is my best friend, I sell all I don't need to buy all I do. It's like Swap Shop used to be in the late 70's I recently got an Akito jacket for £2.99. Okay, it smelt of stale cigarette smoke and dogs and had an exhaust pipe burn on the sleeve but a bottle of patchouli oil and its sweet again, (actually I may have over done it a bit with the patchouli oil). It may not be top of the range waterproof but with the £300 I saved on a new Klim I can buy a lot of hotels rooms on cold and wet nights (assuming they will let someone stinking of patchouli oil past the check in desk).

3. **GPS** is an expense I won't stretch to. Even if you need the comfort of this digital dictator there are advantages to taking a map of the area too, it gives a greater sense of scale. At a glance I can see what track to take through the mountain range and the short diversion to a lake where I can camp the night. Additionally, with a map it is easier for show and tell with

locals and for them to recommend locations, destinations, and the best routes to them. It also avoids displaying your western wealth in poorer countries with enviable electronic gadgetry.

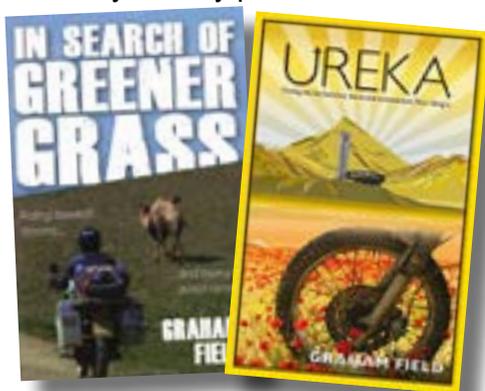
4. **The fake wallet.** I keep the real valuables stashed and use a wallet with some local currency, and a token amount of US dollars and Euros in it. A laminated copy of my driver's licence, some expired credit cards and a photo of a child makes it more personal. To the opportunist it's a good little steal, to the corrupt cop it's all you have, it looks real and it sort of is, its loss may ruin my day but not my entire trip. In Europe always keep your NHS EHIC card on you, even in your fake wallet.

5. The all encompassing **bike cover** is also a good way to lower my profile, particular because I travel alone, inevitably the bike will have to be left unattended at times. Our loaded bikes are so intriguing and often attract a swarm of fiddlers. If they can't see it they won't mess with it and thieves can't simply pull a bag from under a bungee, it's a delaying tactic. Sometimes on the road your stealth can hide your wealth.

6. Back to **credit cards** are they going to expire mid trip? If you call your bank before you leave and say you lost it they will send you a new one with the same expiry date. But if you say its stopped working in the ATM you will get a replacement with an expiry date four years from now.

7. **Spare keys**, I hide them somewhere on the bike, losing my ignition key need not be a major trauma just a matter of unscrewing a side panel where a spare is hidden and taped into the wiring loom. When I've done trips with friends we carried each other's spare keys (I must give them back sometime).

8. As I begin to cram supplies for every eventuality into my panniers it's important to remember they sell **toothpaste and soap** in other countries too. I don't need to take supplies to last the entire trip. I only take the t shirt I am wearing when I leave, I'm bound to see one I want on the road and can add to my travel wardrobe on route. Equally, I can't possibly foresee every problem, can't take a spare bike in my panniers. I wouldn't want to walk it but these days



the world is a small place and most spare parts can reach my secluded location in seven days via a courier, whilst I take a break and become a temporary local in a small town that others only pass through. Sometimes staying put is the most memorable part of the journey. And finally on the subject of spares and break downs, the further from civilisation you find yourself the more ingenuity the locals have. Fabrication, bodging and reinventing is a way of life beyond our OEM part number and year of manufacture culture.

9. A few **emergency meals** and protein bars can help me get through that cold and miserable day when I don't find a restaurant, village grocer or make my desired destination. When this happens to me I wonder, 'is this the emergency I prepared for or will there be a bigger one later? Should I eat my supplies now or save them until death is imminent from starvation?' but at least I have the choice. Oh and those squeezey plastic Marmite containers that suggest you stand them on their lids bloody leak if you do, particularly in hot countries with bumpy roads.

10. The peace of mind gained from leaving with all **visas** intact in a wonderful thing but not always possible, so I try to know in advance where I will get my ongoing visas, the price, the currency I will need, and having letters of invitation (LOI's) in place. It all helps to ease the bureaucratic process. I find that dealing with those niggling distractions helps keep my mind in the moment, appreciating the journey as it occurs and not fretting about unknown documents that may be demanded by various foreign embassies in a country I haven't even reached yet. Also, once my passport photos have been spat at me from the side of my High Street photo booth, I photocopy them on photographic paper. Doubling then quadrupling the quantity I have, because you can't have enough passport photos in the visa application process.

11. '**Two phones Flid,**' my mate calls me; my UK one with my extortionate roaming fee contract and a little unlocked one for a local pay as you go sim card. My mobile bill was horrendous on my return from my Mongolian trip, and calling the network from abroad to increase my credit limit took so long it used up the credit they had just increased my limit to - bastards. A local sim is an economical way to text friends at home and call within the country, whilst keeping control of your prepaid allowance.

12. I'm often asked what the most important thing I had in my panniers was, the answer sounds flippant but '**space**' is the answer, as there

will always be something else to carry once I've left home; be it food, souvenirs, an addition to my 'thought-I-had-all-I-needed check list' so a little gap in my packing is a very useful place.

13. When the preparation and research all becomes too daunting, when my travel budget is disappearing on insurance, visas, carnets, ferries, and other essentials before I have even left home. When my expenditure is equivalent to the price of an all inclusive drinks by the pool package deal in the window of my local travel agents; a poster of tranquillity and relaxation that I manically rush past with my mind on to-do lists, exchange rates and impending deadlines. That's when I take a look at the atlas, the mountain roads, the coastal twisties, the empty planes, the exotic cities; it brings back the excitement, the apprehension of the challenges ahead, and ultimately the butterflies in my tummy. Which all reminds me that there is nothing I want to do more that travel overland independently on my bike into the vaguely researched, but mainly unexpected, as this is where the real adventure begins!

*For two great travel adventures, pick up Graham's first book; *In Search of Greener Grass*, or his second book, *Ureka*, both available from his website; www.grahamfield.co.uk*



Thoughts on planning by *Sam Manicom...*



Luggage

The first rule is, keep it simple and tough. You don't need to buy the most expensive kit. The second rule is whatever you carry, keep your weight minimal, down low and between the wheels. This lowers your centre of gravity and that can make a huge difference on or off road. Panniers? Soft or hard depending on your own preference. Tank panniers? Army surplus rocks. Use 'em to carry water, spare oil you bag of spuds etc. Anything to help you balance out what you are carrying on the back. Waterproof roll bag to sling over your saddle. Tank bag if you really have to but you shouldn't need one – handy home for your camera though. A small spiral cable for locking your helmet to your bike.

Kit

If there are two of you, take a three person tent; one that you can sit up in. A good sleeping mat, 3-4 season sleeping bag, and a cotton sleeping bag liner. Eat and sleep well and you can travel well. A petrol stove. Water bottle/s – at least three litre capacity. A mug, a pot, a plate/bowl, a spoon and a penknife per person; don't forget a fork! Wash kit and camping towel – leave Terry at home! You'll always find a collapsible broly handy to have too. Mine has over 150,000 miles on it now and besides my bike its probably the most useful bit of travel kit I have. Camera and plenty of memory cards. As an optimist – Sun tan lotion, factor thirty at least.

Admin

Maps – oh yes – really know where you are in the world. GPS – yes ok! But don't put your blinkers on when you plug yours in. Consider using your mobile phone to double up with this task. Camera too? Carnet – if relevant. Both copies of your licence. International Driving License. MOT – up to date of course. Bike registration docs. EU motorcycle insurance – most won't cover you once you get into the far east of Europe. Buy insurance at the border if that's the case – it's an adventure and not hard. Travel Insurance – make sure yours covers whatever cc your bike is, allows you to ride off road too and includes repatriation. E111 medical card. Yellow Fever Certificate for countries in Africa and South/Central America, Inoculation Record book. Credit and Debit cards. Some Euro cash and Dollars. Find as many places as possible to hide chunks away

in. And do wrap your stashes in plastic. Sweat and river falls can be a severe form of deflation! And your passport of course! Photocopy of all your paperwork. Two sets; one to leave at home, and one to carry with you in a safe, waterproof place. Guide book? I like the pages to make notes and recommendations on. Lap top? Do you really have to?

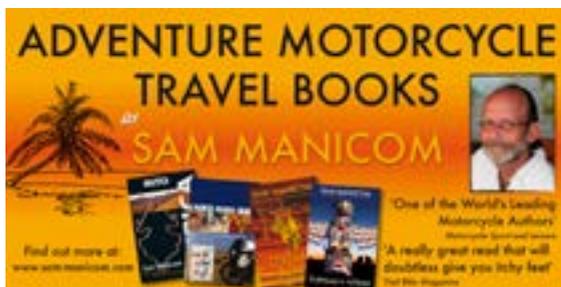
Clothing

Waterproof protective bike gear. Comfortable bike boots. Flip flops so you have something to wear off the bike and in dodgy looking showers. Thin layers so you can adapt to temperature changes. A heated waistcoat will make you smile. Two T-shirts (merino wool stays odour free for days at a time), a fleece, three undies, three pairs socks, hat with a brim, lightweight trousers, and a multi-purpose sarong! A sarong is always handy to have. You can use it for a multitude of things including a sheet, a dash to the loo in the middle of the night, they are great for laying on the beach and if you do the bung-everything-in-the-laundrette gig, you'll feel less of a burke in one than you would in a black bin liner!

Bike spares

Give your bike a full service at least a month before you go – no nasty last-minute surprises then. Do a final oil and tyre check just before you set off. Duct tape, cable ties and a spare bulb kit. Puncture repair kit including tyre levers and a pump. Run spare throttle, clutch and brake cables in line on the bike. The basic electronics for your bike. Small selection of nuts and bolts. Build up a good relationship with your dealer at home so he's lined up for long distance help – if – you need it. Check your bike every day you have a rough one. It's your best mate after all. That's that lot sorted then. Just remember that you really don't need much kit and if you do need something along the way, buy yourself a souvenir! Oh, and do pay attention to how you pack your kit. Vibrations can quickly wear holes in things - watch what you pack next to what.

Language? Learn how to say "Hello", "Please", "Which way to..." and "Thank you", in the language of every country you'll ride. It's fun getting your tongue around some of 'em! What an amazing difference that can make to the way people treat you...



Visit www.sam-manicom.com to find out more about Sam's great books...

Useful websites

www.horizonsunlimited.com

This is the only place really to go when planning your next adventure. The information comes from those on the ground, with forums specific to each geographical location and every aspect of an adventure, from the planning, to the bike prep, to the documentation.

www.advrider.com

An American based site that is more slanted towards ride reports and general chat about long distance riding. But still a great wealth of information and inspiration to be found.

www.sahara-overland.com

For anyone thinking of riding North America this site is invaluable. It's operated by Chris Scott, author of the Adventure Motorcyclists Handbook and specific guides on Morocco. Everything you need to know from visas to border crossings to which places you need to avoid.

www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Information on visas, basic travelling advice and safety alerts.

www.rac.co.uk/travel/driving-abroad/carnet-de-passage

This is the home of the Carnet de Passage and a place you'll soon find yourself familiar with if you need such a document for your adventure.

www.transamtrail.com

This is the website you need to go to if you're planning on riding the Trans American Trail, a near on 3,000 mile off-road route from the East coast of America to the West.

www.gt-rider.com

If you've ever thought of riding South East Asia, particularly the area to the north, around the Golden Triangle of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, then this site is a great place to start. Advice on mapping, route advice, planning, preparation for trips in and around South East Asia.

www.nathanmillward.com

I've put this mini guide together in the hope of getting more people out on the road and using their bikes, however big their adventures happen to be. I've also got a couple of books; *The Long Ride Home* and *Running Towards the Light*, about my journey first from Sydney to London and secondly across America. See the website to find out more....

