

Mission Madagascar

TOURATECH
UNITED PEOPLE OF ADVENTURE
2016



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SPECIAL ISSUE

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ADVENTURE EXTREME

BY JON BENTMAN,
PHOTO: TOURATECH

THE LOCAL RIDERS were laughing. At us, of course. They were considerate enough to keep their comments to themselves, but you could tell what was going through their minds: *'You're going where – on those?!'*

They of course knew a little more than us – well, a lot more – about the tracks we were preparing to ride. Years, lifetimes, meant they had adapted to the local conditions, so rode these tracks on lightweight 125cc commuter bikes with knobbly tyres, wearing just cotton shirts and (*curiously*) construction hats, if they wore any head protection at all.

We... well we'd just stepped off the plane to meet our bikes that had just been landed off the boat. There were 13 super-adventure bikes lined up, not one of them would tip less than 260kg, most once loaded with all our stuff would probably hit at least 300kg – three times the weight of one of their machines.

Not that we were ignorant or entirely blind to the situation. Yes, small bikes were the logical solution. But then Touratech aren't in the business of selling commuter bikes – their stock in trade is adventure motorcycle equipment. So this was the challenge, to ride these super-adventures on tracks that were not designed for them into a region such bikes have never been before. Sight-unseen as it were.

The challenge was to prove to be far greater than any of us might have imagined. We'd ride – well, push, pull, heave, drag – through terrain you'd not



see in a common enduro. And suffer the consequences – as is often the case, the camera wasn't always there to see the worst moments, such as the time one of the Africa Twins fell from the plank bridge and landed in the drainage ditch and very nearly fully submerged, or the time July's knee so painfully gave out as his 1190R tripped in a deep rut (*only two operations to sort – surgical procedures we're talking, to be perfectly clear*).

We kept thinking our leader, Touratech's Herbert Schwarz, knew exactly what was happening, what lay ahead. But then events proved otherwise, time and again. It turns out Herbert is merely the most relaxed, calm man you'll ever find, that's all.

Mondo Enduro this trip wasn't. It wasn't intended to be, wasn't pretending to be anything except what it was – an experiment in bringing together six ordinary people from six continents and putting them down in a remote location, giving them some bikes and equipment and letting them get on with it. So while it was a brief encounter it was very intense, if you count in a broken leg and busted knee you could call it quite brutal. But also very beautiful, this was Madagascar, a majestic island with a gentle, generous – if asset poor – population.

Touratech's United People of Adventure into Madagascar was something quite unique. Certainly something worth sharing.





OCEAN COLOUR SCENE

I guess this is one reason we travel, to find vistas such as this – to have your tent flap open onto such fantastic natural beauty. Just the two words, '*Indian Ocean*' create an immediate mental stimuli. Jan-Peter, film cameraman, looks set for a spot of surfing on his sleeping mat, but he was simply absorbing the beauty. It's something you have to do, to breathe it in, to burn the moment into your memory forever. For eventually, always sooner than later, you have to move on.

Image: JB



THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

Sometimes you just struggle to absorb everything. The Indian Ocean moment (on the previous page) is an obvious one, but the simple curve in the track on the edge of where the jungle meets the ocean, that's less obvious. You need to stop, turn off the engine and look in every direction; sometimes the best views are behind you. And then you get to see, as here, how nature does the most spectacular planting schemes all by itself.

Image: JB





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UNITED PEOPLE OF ADVENTURE EXPLAINED

TOURATECH'S BRAND NEW project took six people from six continents on an all-expenses paid 10-day adventure ride into an exotic location: Madagascar.

The six were selected from the hundreds who submitted three-minute videos explaining why they should join Touratech's CEO Herbert Schwarz and his photo-journalist wife Ramona on this adventure of a lifetime.

Their mission was to cross the Cap Est region to reach a boat to cross the Baie d'Antongil before connecting to the notorious RN5 (one of the world's most infamous roads – given it's nothing more than a clay and mud river for much of its length) and ride the tortuous loop around to the capital, Antananarivo. A distance of 1000km in ten days – not too difficult.

Only, in the tradition of adventure, the route had never been ridden before and so the group found themselves in a fight with the odds stacked heavily against them. And then came the hurricane...

Our connection? Our editor JB was along as the tour's writer in residence.

By the way, look out for UPoA 2...



Touratech's United People of Adventure

Touratech created a new concept for 2016, inviting fellow adventurers to join them on an all-expenses paid adventure in Madagascar on a tour known as the United People of Adventure. Over 200 applied for the six positions. And the six certainly got to experience what Touratech call real adventure...

Words: Jon Bentman

Photos: Herbert & Ramona Schwarz, Robert Davies

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WHETHER THE VILLAGERS had any concept of the former Paris Dakar Rally it's hard to say – it's amazing just how far televisual media can reach – and whether they could associate the scenes before them with that of the mighty race – well that's another thing. But they'd heard the rumble of the big adventure bikes drawing slowly closer for some time, so by the time they saw the first bike emerge from the forest they were lining the main track through their village, six-deep. And they could clearly sense they were going to see some kind of a spectacle.

Six-deep just about describes the depth of the sand that constituted their main track, six-inches or six-feet, it was deep sand and it grabbed at the wheels of the UPoA machines mercilessly. The villagers whooped and hollered as in the mid-day heat the UPoA riders crashed onto their sides all along the trail, over and over, as the struggle to keep a near-300kg adventure



Gunther wasn't going to let a little thing like dropping the bike get him down!



Touratech's UPoA

bike upright and moving proved near-impossible. In the villagers' eyes this had to be comedy gold, while for the UPoA riders it was torture – behind the visors of their Aventuro helmets sweat droplets were stinging their eyes. One person's adventure ride is clearly another's situation comedy.

Yes, it pays to have a good sense of humour if you want to venture into the unknown on a fully-loaded adventure bike, for if not the challenges, the mishaps, the sometimes sheer ridiculousness of the undertaking, could unravel you. And seeing as how the inaugural Touratech United People of Adventure ride into Madagascar very quickly became an exercise in extreme adventuring, then good humour was certainly much needed.

Six nations cup?

Not six nations, six continents in fact. The concept behind the UPoA was to unite six individuals from the six inhabited continents of the world together in a serious adventure ride. It's a brand new concept from Herbert and Ramona Schwarz of Touratech.

"I can't take credit for this, it was Ramona's idea," explains Herbert Schwarz (joint-CEO at Touratech). *"But we developed the idea together, not just Ramona and*




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Herbert & Ramona
Schwarz

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The calm before the storm, literally! Little did they know what was in store over the next few days...



myself, but with our team at Touratech. Essentially the UPoA is everything that Touratech is – adventurous and risk-taking but also fun, the stuff of dreams.

“Over the years Ramona and I have made many adventures, at least one big trip every year, and we’ve shared those through our films and magazine features. But without a doubt taking the step to share such a trip in real time, in person, with some of our customers, that really excited us. The risks we could see, writ large, but the opportunity to share, to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our customers, out there in the field, that was just too fantastic to let go. To be able to share in this way is a wonderful opportunity.”

The six who went to Madagascar had been whittled down from the 200+ who’d answered the open invitation from Herbert and Ramona, sent out via YouTube, to explain (in a three-minute video) why they should have a place in the UPoA. Some 12 semi-finalists were selected and through a weekend of fun and games (personality tests, team building challenges and riding trials included) at the Touratech HQ in the Black Forest, the final six were picked.

The ride itself in Madagascar looked, on paper, like a reasonable undertaking – 1000km in ten days, along a route that hugged the north east coast. Sounds straight forward, even leisurely, but in the event was anything but.

Getting to the start point of the ride was



Touratech's UPoA

challenging enough. For some it was a solid 30 hours of international flights, plus a last hour and half on a local twin-engined turbo-prop (*only boarded after a suitably grueling African game of endurance called border control*) to an airfield near the top of the island. Then an hour and a bit in a local coach, driven with F1-style verve by a young man who looked suspiciously like a 14-year-old schoolboy...

For the bikes which, much like the riders, were chosen on the basis of one from every corner, the journey had been much longer. Once adventure-prepared at Touratech HQ the bikes had been loaded into a container and shipped to Madagascar – the long way round, passing the Cape of Good Hope on the southernmost tip of South Africa (*there are no fast boats to Madagascar*). Only as

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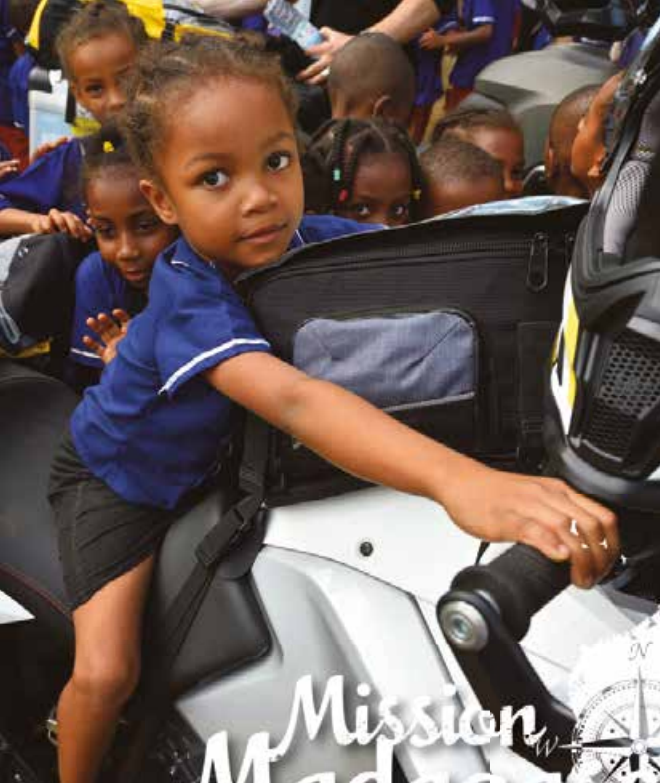


the international port wasn't the start point, the bikes had then to be taken out of the container and strapped to the deck of much smaller coaster which chugged its way up the east coast to the town of Antalaha. There's no port in Antalaha, just a single breakwater by which the ships can tie up, if they don't mind getting jostled by the waves. Unloading was by fork lift truck with plenty of manual help. In all a journey that stretched into months, and one that saw the bikes arrive 24 hours ahead of the riders. Just as well all had survived the journey unharmed, with just a few low batteries and some salt-water corrosion to show for the ordeal.

People United

The beginning of the adventure wasn't actually about bikes at all. Instead an orphanage. This was core to the ethos of UPoA – that the ride should touch the local people, not just those in the group. And so before the ride got going the UPoA team were to be found at the Orphelinat d'Antalaha, where they spent an afternoon with 36 orphans and 160 other school children. To the children they offered a lesson in global geography, highlighting the six continents from where they'd come. If the children's attention should start to wane, then they threw in some singing, even magic tricks. Then later the UPoA riders revisited the orphanage with newly acquired mattresses for their dormitory, to go with the





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Touratech's UPoA

gifts they had given earlier. Touratech are establishing a lasting relationship with the orphanage, there will be fundraising for it at the Travel Event this year. Ethical adventuring, you might say.

If that wasn't enough of an introduction to the local community, then on the second morning in Madagascar the UPoA met with what seemed like most of Antalaha and the surrounding region. A meet and greet had been organised with the town's mayor and all the town were invited to meet the riders at the local sports ground. The occasion started gently, but steadily more and more people arrived. The meeting became altogether more exciting when the mayor suggested the UPoA bikes could be ridden around the sand track that circles the main pitch. And soon enough the UPoA riders got the hang of



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giving pillion rides – for the children first, but after a while the ‘children’ got older and taller as all wanted to experience a ride on these adventure motorcycles.

Hitting the trail, literally...

When the ride got underway, the UPoA riders were in for a shock. The rainy season was refusing to call it quits and heavy overnight rains made for wet trails. That might be okay if those were sand trails, but the first trails the UPoA riders encountered were hard-packed clay, which most experienced riders will know becomes ice-like when wet. So, riding for the first time on unfamiliar near-300kg adventure bikes this made for some super-challenging riding.





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And a fair few spills. Where the clay wasn't slick it was underwater. The toughest first kilometres you could imagine.

When the clay finally ended it was replaced by deep sand – another adventure bike 'anti'. It was certainly enough to give the riders a real workout. When at last they arrived at the first significant river crossing – necessitating a raft-ferry to cross – there was some relief, a chance to recover after the hours of intense concentration.

The ferry rides looked sketchy, but the ferrymen had no qualms about loading up four bikes at a time on their rafts made from recycled 50-gallon drums, old planks and rope lashings. To their credit they safely delivered the cargo to the far shores,



although one of the local riders who accompanied the UPoA riders on his 125cc commuter bike did topple once he got to the landing stage, bike and rider going for an unplanned swim. Meanwhile local 'traders' would sell oranges or fried bananas and jack fruits to the waiting riders. But Herbert can always be relied upon to go one better, and on the second crossing he found a shack selling nearly-cool beers, so settled-in comfortably while the time ticked slowly by as the rest of the bikes were ferried over.

The upshot of such trials and tribulations was progress of a mere 50km for the day. This was quite a shock given the 12 hours of toil (*begun at 4:30am*) and made barely a dent on the 1000km hoped to be ridden within the ten days.

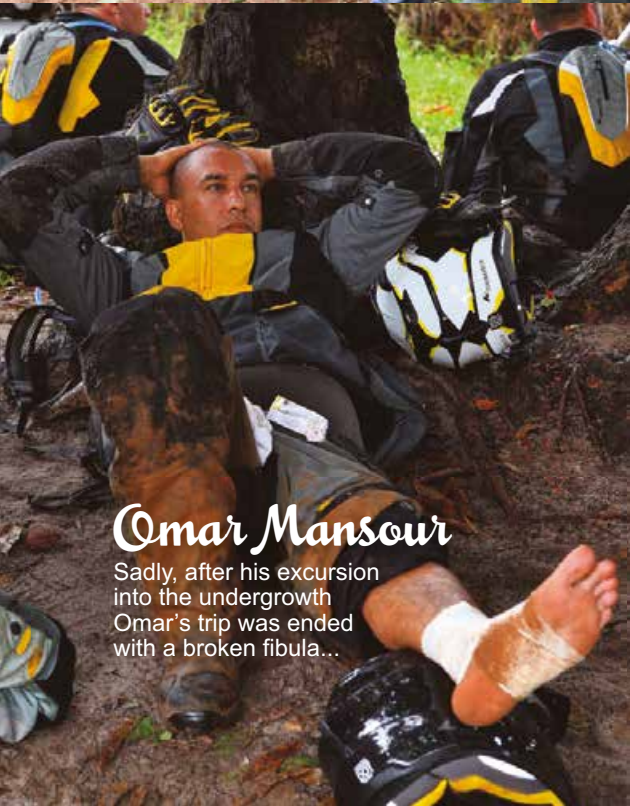
Worse was to come. Day two had only just begun when Omar Mansour, the UPoA rider representing Africa, took a dive from his Yamaha Super Ténéré in deep sand, pinning his ankle under the bike. Omar knew he'd broken a bone and knew his UPoA adventure was over there and then. There were in fact two doctors in the team, Australian surgeon Robert Davies (*assigned Touratech doctor and photographer*) and Gudmundur Bjornsson (*UPoA rider representing Europe*) plus Andrea Box (*UPoA Australia*) who's a trauma nurse, so Omar couldn't have had better on the spot attention. The team had equipped themselves with excellent medical supplies too, so were able to bandage and medicate Omar into a state of some comfort quite readily.

Getting the injured, near-incapacitated, Omar out of the bush, back to his home, was an altogether bigger challenge. But between local contacts and coordination with Touratech HQ back in Germany, Omar (*and his Yamaha*)



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Omar Mansour

Sadly, after his excursion into the undergrowth Omar's trip was ended with a broken fibula...



were collected by a pick-up and over the next seven days took the step by step journey back to Egypt, where the doctors' diagnosis of a broken fibula was confirmed – and the break plated. For Omar the real loss was missing out on the rest of the adventure: *"When it came to saying goodbye to the team the sadness in my heart was way stronger than the pain of my broken leg."*

The ordeal

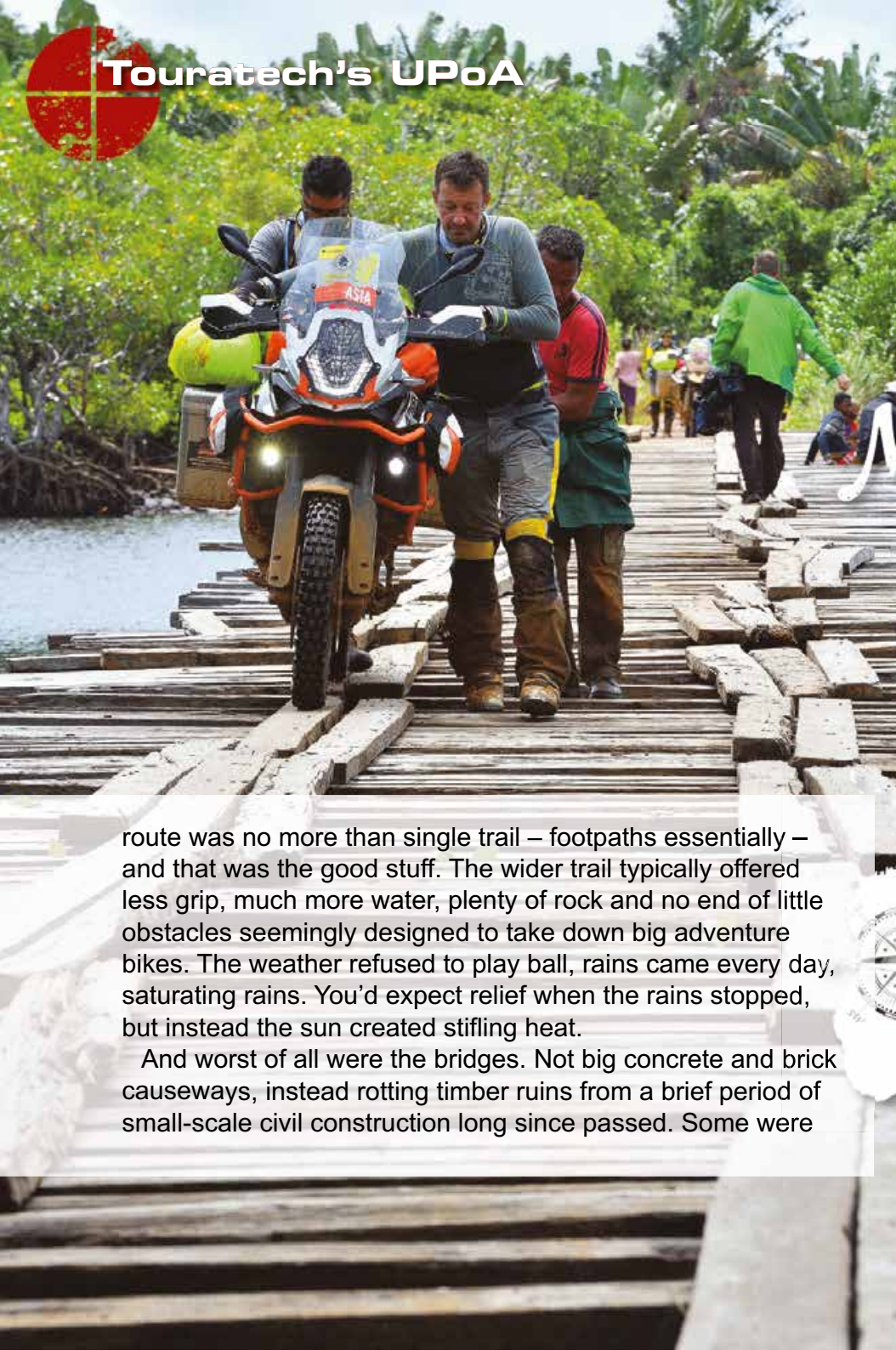
The following days saw slow progress. This was a route that's not been previously documented by any adventure rider and the conditions on the trail were completely unknown. If the riders hoped for the best they got delivered the worst. In places the



There was always an audience on hand...

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route was no more than single trail – footpaths essentially – and that was the good stuff. The wider trail typically offered less grip, much more water, plenty of rock and no end of little obstacles seemingly designed to take down big adventure bikes. The weather refused to play ball, rains came every day, saturating rains. You'd expect relief when the rains stopped, but instead the sun created stifling heat.

And worst of all were the bridges. Not big concrete and brick causeways, instead rotting timber ruins from a brief period of small-scale civil construction long since passed. Some were



THE UPoA Identities

UPoA Africa

Omar Mansour, 42, from Alexandria in Egypt. Has a career in law, but quickly impressed the team with his enthusiasm, language skills and humour. Omar played to the historic stereo-typing of Egyptians as nomadic camel-loving merchants, acting the jovial bartering entrepreneur whenever he could.

Bike: Yamaha Super Ténéré



UPoA Asia

July Behl, 34, contracts manager, born in India now resettled in London. A quiet, gentle man, his star turn is food. His Indian upbringing has given him an enviable knowledge of herbs and spices – something the UPoA riders all got to appreciate.

Bike: KTM 1190 R



UPoA Australia

Andrea Box, 25, a trauma nurse and paramedic from Melbourne. With 15 years of dirt biking experience and with many hours riding in the Aussie outback on her Triumph Tiger 800XC, she was every inch the well-practiced rider.

Bike: Triumph Tiger 800XCX



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UPoA South America
Gunther Fischli, 39, from Brazil. A company director, Gunther had plenty of get-up-and-go, and can-do, and wasn't afraid to trail blaze off the front of the group, earning the nickname of Thor!
Bike: Suzuki V-Strom 1000



UPoA North America
Benjamin Myers, 38, from California. Artist and designer. With July he shared a passion for cooking – this was one adventure where no one went hungry.
Bike: Ducati 1200 Multistrada Enduro



UPoA Europe
Gudmunder Bjornsson, 58, from Iceland, a doctor. Became the UPoA's Papa figure given his appropriately gentle thoughtful disposition (*Herbert being named, with some gentle humour, 'Fearless Leader'*). Nonetheless an experienced and handy enduro rider.

Bike: Honda Africa Twin



little more than small rafts of loose planks balanced on grassy islets, barely inches above the water, some were taller, longer crossings over significant areas of water-logged land, or over rivers. But all were rotten, with vast gaping holes and fractured planks. And when wetted with a mix of rain and clay were ice-like. All needed prior inspection and a best attempt at repair before crossing. Some could then be ridden – a real test of nerve – others the bikes had to be pushed over – a much tougher, energy-sapping proposition. The crossings did not all go to plan, with wheels falling through holes, bikes going over the side on one or two occasions and plenty of dropped bikes,

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fortunately without too much damage to man or machine.

The overnight camps, contrarily, proved relatively comfortable. The first night by the Indian Ocean was spectacular. After everyone enjoyed a dip in the warm ocean, the UPoA's two chefs, Benjamin (*North America*) and July (*Asia*) got to work in producing a fantastic feast from rice, potatoes, carrots, avocados and onions, all bought from the locals. Herbert again seemed able to pull strings with the locals to procure a crate of beer. In the morning a Christian mission offered the team a breakfast of coffee, bread and jam.

Not all camps were as comfortable, one on the banks of a river had to be pitched in torrential rain and only through clever team-work were the tent inners kept relatively dry.





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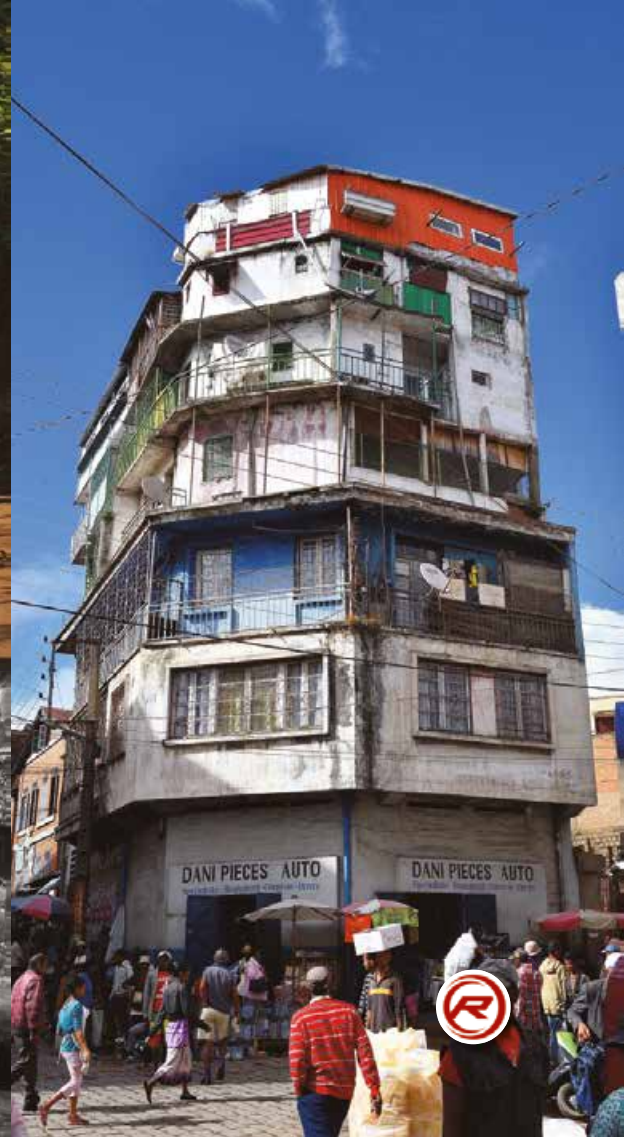
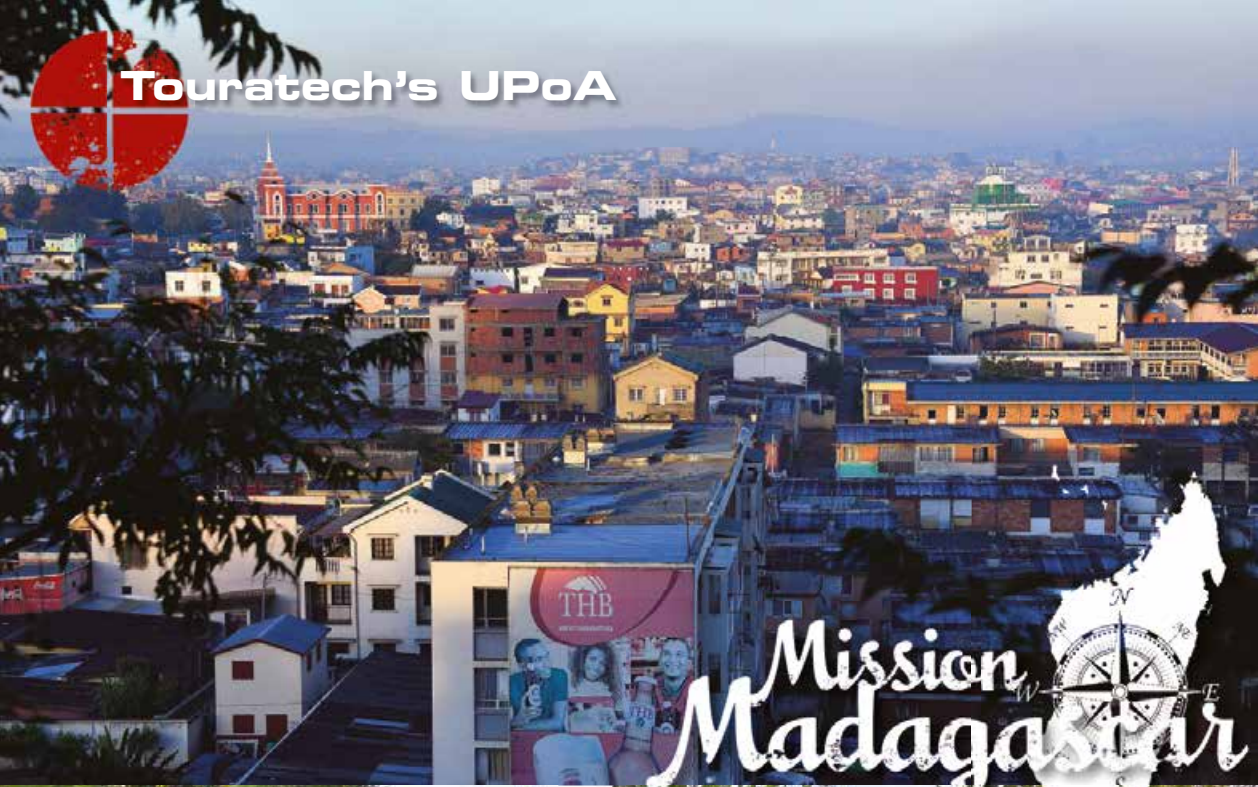
But that night the UPoA riders retired to their tents soaked to the skin and awoke to more rain, to re-dress in the same soaked Campañeros (*it being too warm and humid to wear the waterproof second layers*).

A very necessary escape

On day five after even more intensive pushing and pulling the team were camped on the shores of the Indian Ocean. The plan had been to take a coaster south, across a bay and to link up to the infamous RN5 at Mananara. Only no boat could reach the UPoA riders. In the Indian Ocean a massive cyclone – the biggest ever recorded for the region – was ravaging the seas with 300km/h winds. No boat was permitted to sail. There could be no sailings, for days maybe even weeks.

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But, as well, with 'Cyclone Fantala' headed for Madagascar the team had to decide on a cyclone avoidance strategy. Should they run south 70km to the very tip of Cap Masoala with a small hope that they might find a boat to make the shorter sea crossing to Mananara and the RN5? Only this was a ride into more unknown territory, where progress was likely to replicate the 20km per day rate of their last day. And in that time it could be the team might get hit by the cyclone before they reached safety. Or should they return north, to the shelter of the concrete buildings at Antalaha or a possible escape route across the north and west of the island?

The decision almost broke the team, some wanting to take the gamble on going south, some certain the only safe option was the run north. In the end the team rode north, so that by the eighth day of their adventure they



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were back in Antalaha. With the cyclone still threatening there could be no riding further north either. The team were defeated, but they were – in the spirit of the UPoA – still a team. They'd ridden the most extreme trails they'd ever seen – twice! It had been an adventure, a very real one indeed.

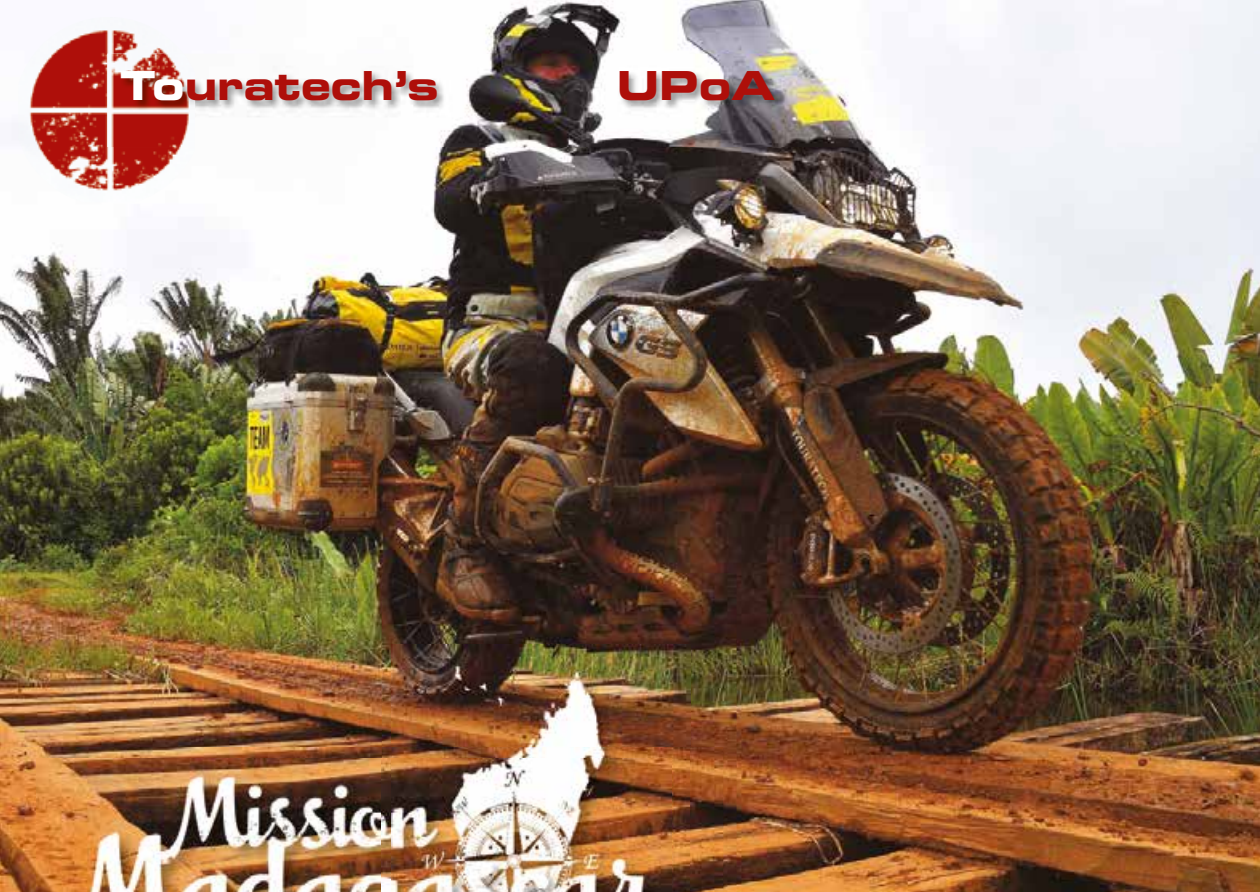
The only landfall Cyclone Fantala ever made was on the near-uninhabited island of Farquar, in the Seychelles, where the environmental damage was reported as very, very extensive – the people on the island surviving only by having taken refuge in purpose-built cyclone proof facilities. In much diminished state its remnants met the mainland of Africa at Tanzania, but still created much mayhem, tragically killing 13. It was a phenomenon not to be messed with.

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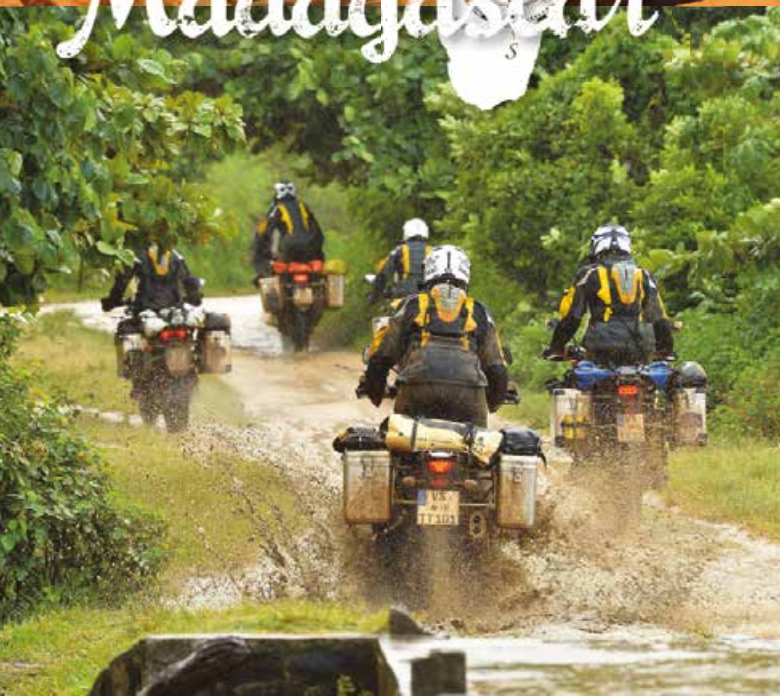


For its part, the United People of Adventure is far from done. Already Touratech are pouring over their global mapping. UPoA 2 is coming...





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Madagascar (Malagasy: *Madagasikara*) Situated off the south-east coast of Africa. Since being separated from the mainland during the prehistoric break-up of the supercontinent Gondwana some 88million years ago, Madagascar became a biodiversity hotspot. 90% of its native wildlife can be found nowhere else on earth. First archaeological evidence of human activity on the island dates to 2000BC. Human settlement began between 350 BC and AD550 by Austronesian people arriving by outrigger canoes from Borneo. These were joined by Bantu migrants crossing the Mozambique Channel from East Africa around AD 1000. Since then the population has steadily increased, almost doubling between 1993 and today, currently an estimated 22.4 million, putting the diverse eco-systems and unique wildlife under increasing threat.

The United People of Adventure 2016

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ONLINE

Catch up with the whole story of the 2016 UPoA...

Through the daily video diaries posted by Touratech:

Episode One:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJDV7qgHJDU>

Episode Two:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QD0WrMQ_8VI

Episode Three:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isy-WnrT0S8>

Episode Four:

<https://youtu.be/2CpsghJBTKY>

Episode Five:

<https://youtu.be/GbXBSCMOctA>

Episode Six:

https://youtu.be/_eKNLb8i520

Episode Seven:

<https://youtu.be/8Nx00Ta5Fc>

Through JB's daily updates (only 24,000 words in total!) at the UPoA dedicated website:

www.real-adv.com



Back Issues



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www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0K02x9reL0



www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrQoVPEK1_E



www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8ePvj2E4M



www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oHMTpB0RNw



www.youtube.com/watch?v=54lIOS3nMIE



www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvyUxbymuMU



www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv9Jw_FU910



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www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVYqp3bITnc



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www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntK0Zl63tuA



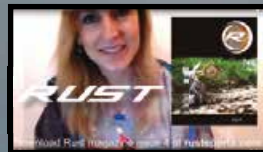
www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XEkJabHL4



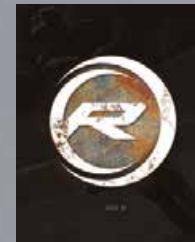
www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX4-14sl0HE



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooPAUryxQzY



www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_co4hGeECA



ISSUE #1



AFRICA TWIN SPECIAL



ISSUE #2



HUSQVARNA 701 SPECIAL



YAMAHA WR450F SPECIAL



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ISSUE #8



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ISSUE #10



ISSUE #11

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Extreme Test

Triumph

*over adversity/obesity/conformity
(delete as appropriate)*

Triumph's Tiger Explorer 1200 wasn't a first choice for an extreme moto-adventure into the unknown. Too heavy, wrong engine type, wrong wheels –there were all manner of apparent shortcomings. Could it really deal with serious off-roading? Given no choice, we were about to find out...

Words: Jon Bentman
Images: Herbert & Ramona Schwarz and Robert Davies





IT'S GOOD TO be different. The adventure world is dominated by twins, be they boxer-twins (BMW), vee-twins (KTM, Ducati) or parallel twins (Yamaha, Honda). Triples? Before Triumph came along with their Tigers (800 & 1200), there was briefly the Benelli TreK Amazonas (back in 2006) but that was more road bike, like a Ducati Multistrada, than a proper adventure bike. You might argue the same of the Tiger Explorer 1200, if you were feeling mean. But there is reason behind the twins prevailing, and that's to do with engine characteristic: twins are an excellent design for producing solid low-rev torque, which is ideal for off-road and slow-ride cruising. Multis, like triples and fours – not so much, these are the rev hounds of the biking world. Which puts the Explorer on the back foot before this test even starts.

Triumph
over adversity/obesity/conformity
(delete as appropriate)



Extreme Test

And that would to some extent explain why, when it was revealed to me (JB) by Touratech's Ramona Schwarz that I was to pilot the mighty Explorer 1200 in the UPoA, that I did utter a fair few expletives. For the general consensus has been this bike is the heaviest of the adventure types and with that three-cylinder motor it's more road-biased than dirt. It would be a big challenge to keep the Explorer plugging away, and upright, where we were heading, on the infamous RN5 and all that. Now I'd like to say I keep an open mind, but of course that wouldn't be true. No, I wasn't looking forward to this.

IT'S IMMENSE!

First impressions on seeing the Explorer in Madagascar? Immense size – although that's common to all 1200cc adventure bikes. They are ridiculously huge if we're honest. 'Sledgehammer to crack a nut' always comes to mind. Picking them up off their stand, pushing them around, doing U-turns in service stations – all of this is quite a challenge on these bikes, and you really don't want to drop one. Usually it takes for you to actually start riding the bikes before they begin to make sense, once up and running the excess weight becomes less of an issue.

Even so, being 20kg heavier than a BMW R1200GS is not the best starting place for any wannabe adventure machine. And when you look at the Explorer's engine, sitting high and handsome under that trellis type frame, you just know it's 259kg with a high centre of gravity. Only this exact bike isn't 259kg because Herbert Schwarz has waved his yellow-and-black wand over the bike and now it has added stuff, like panniers and crash bars, hand guards, spot lights, tank bag, radiator guards... Then I have my own luggage





to add, so throw on another 25kg there. In my riding kit I'd be another 100kg of *(live)* load too, so I'd be stressing the Pirelli Scorpion Rally tyres to the tune of a fair 400kg with the Triumph.

Now, continuing on first impressions – is it handsome? I'd say no. In its defence it is at least brutish. It lacks the sense of integration the GS has developed and the headlamp arrangement lacks any sense of design at all, however there is an underlying feeling of quality, the more you look the more you appreciate the effort that's gone into this machine. However, hit the starter button and the sound of the triple, broadcast through an aftermarket carbon fibre Remus muffler, is a gratifyingly masculine. Apparently these motors can sound a mite '*agricultural*', a bit

Triumph
over adversity/obesity/conformity
(delete as appropriate)

Continued on page 39



Extreme Test

The New Tiger Explorer

RUST needs to get its hands on one of these! The revamped 2016 Tiger Explorer 1200 certainly gives the answers to any shortcomings we may have perceived.

THE LATEST EDITION comes with semi-active suspension to match that of BMW and Touratech. The introduction of rider modes (*Road, Rain, Sport, Off-Road* and 'fully customizable') makes the operation of functions such as engine mapping, ABS, traction control and damping characteristics much easier and more intuitive – and the system remembers your settings, more to the point. The brakes (*by Brembo*) have been upgraded to radial type to match the GS while the wheel sizes have been upgraded (*with wire spoke type on the XC models*) to the same sizes as the competition, so you can choose from the latest 120/70-19 and 170/60-17 tubeless tyres. There's been a moderate restyle too – not that it looks any more stylish, probably even more brutish in our opinion. Still weighs a hefty 258kg (*dry*) though! All up – a damn good job.

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(delete as appropriate)



Triumph

over adversity/~~obesity~~/conformity
(delete as appropriate)

clattery, but this one was mechanically quiet enough – either that or the exhaust was drowning the engine noises out. So, aurally a delight, although, to my knowledge, sounding like a 1970s Rob North Trident road racer has never featured high on a rider's wish list for adventure bike attributes.

The ride position was, though, just about spot on. I note that the shaft drive doesn't push out at your left ankle anything like that of the Yamaha Super Ténéré and the tank is deeply sculpted so the bike is quite narrow through the mid section. Herbert had added a Touratech seat to this bike, too, and I had this set to the higher position to make sure I didn't have to bend my legs too much when seated and so that the seat was in the right place to be squeezed by my knees when stood. With a handlebar riser kit fitted I found the standing position for off-road riding to be spot on, proper off-road natural – and neutral – and but for the tank bag I could lean as far forward as I'd want. I'm pretty sure between Herbert and Wolfgang (*Touratech's guru of bike preparation*) they'd had a proper think about these things and tailored the bike's set-up to my dimensions.

Another house point to Triumph for equipping the Explorer with a decent battery and high-output alternator. When we arrived in Madagascar Herbert warned us that after the long sea voyage a bunch of the batteries were low and some care was needed not to drain the batteries still more. While in the



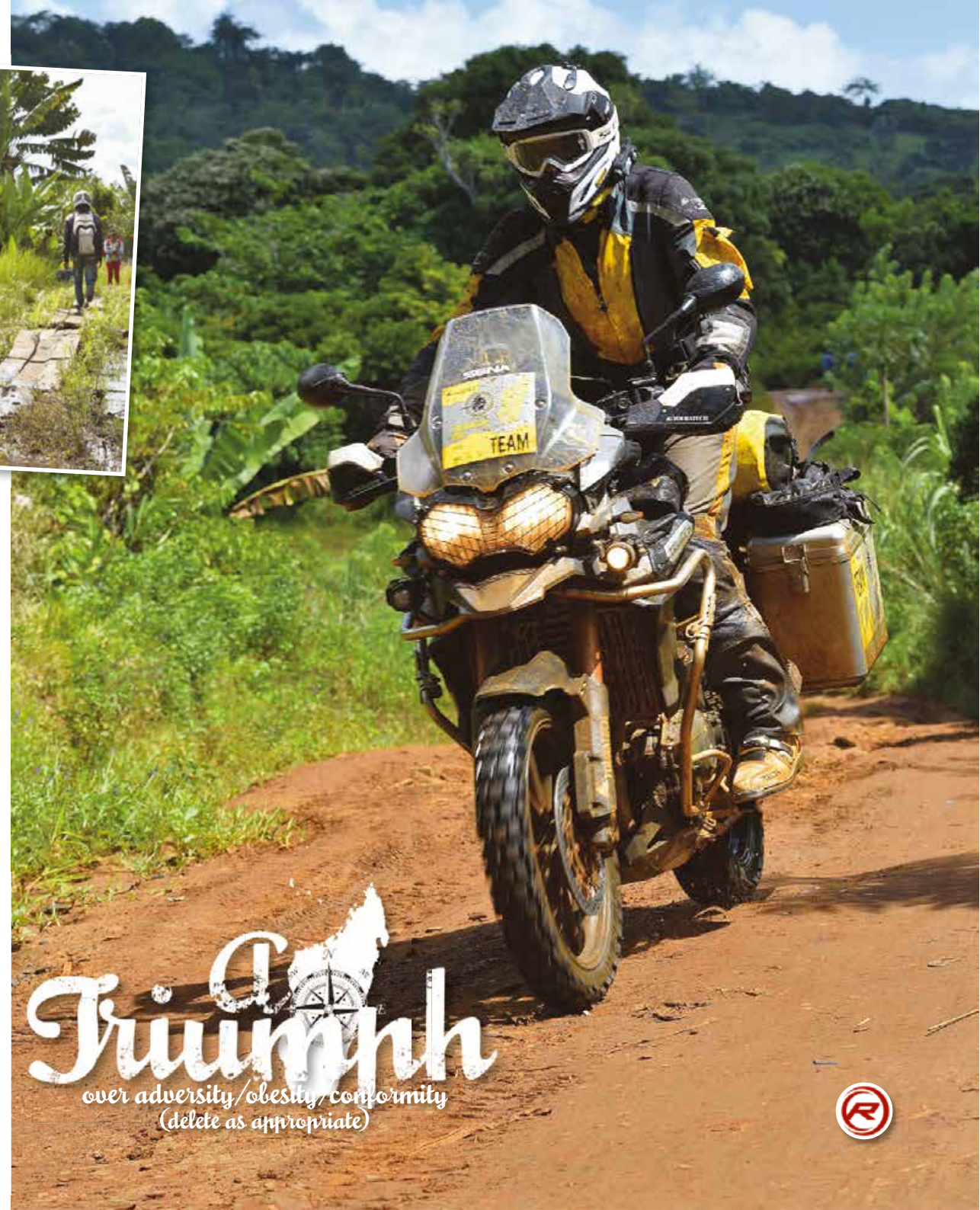
Extreme Test

course of the UPoA one KTM and the Ducati both succumbed to flat batteries, the Triumph though remained 100% strong beginning to end, even if I'd left the ignition and lights on (*with the engine off*) for long periods.

Now usually adventure bike tests are 90% road and 10% off-road in bias. Not so here, the exact opposite, probably 95% off-road in fact. So, on the short section of road that we encountered the Explorer was definitely sat at the smooth end of the spectrum. That triple's power delivery is slick – with a claimed 135bhp it's 10bhp stronger than the GS – and the gearbox is easy-shifting too so the big bike just purred along, comfort was obvious, and the mid-range howl meant there was fun to be had in making pretty tunes where the road slowed and then opened out again.

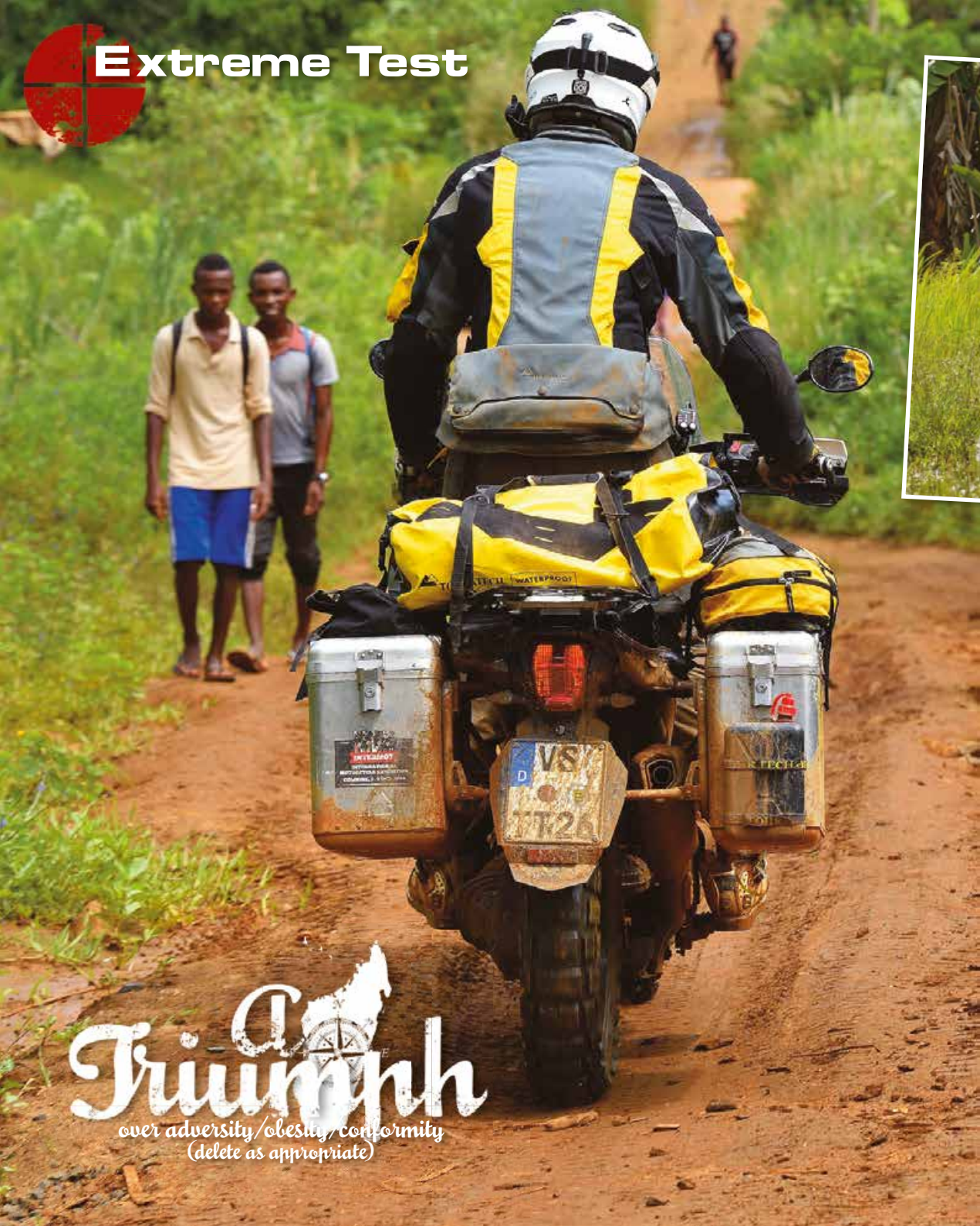
EXPECTING THE WORST...

The surprise was the off-road performance. Expecting the worst, it delivered not exactly the best, but at the very least delivered a seriously good account of itself. This being the older (new-in-2012) model it runs (stock) on Kayaba suspension, which is generally pretty good quality kit (there was a fairly comprehensive update for 2015, with a swap to WP suspension). But this particular bike had seen a comprehensive overhaul of its own with a progressive spring kit in the forks and a complete Touratech 'ACE' shock unit in the rear, with electronic adjustment of the preload and damping circuits. The upshot was a very refined ride. It would still struggle not to completely collapse under the pressure of flat-landing off jumps (*with 400kg to contend with, most every adventure bike would*) but it was firm yet sensitive enough to give a good feel for the terrain.



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(delete as appropriate)





Triumph
over adversity/obesity/conformity
(delete as appropriate)



The power was mostly just fine. The most important thing to remember was to turn the traction control off. Without the finesse of BMW's Enduro Pro mode, or even that of the traction control fitted to Yamaha's Super Ténéré, with TC on the system interrupted way too early, making riding in tricky conditions impossible. There was plenty enough throttle control – this is a ride-by-wire set-up but felt conventional enough in response – to keep everything safe without it, so riding without traction control

was the call. Only snag, with this older Explorer – as with many of the bikes here – was each time you turned the ignition off the traction control would reset to 'on' as default. And turning it off again was a royal pain requiring a sequence of button pushing that put minutes – felt like hours – into each restart.

Ridden without direct comparison to the twins, a rider would be quite happy on the Explorer. It was only when we took time out for some photos, and to swap saddles, that were able to appreciate the differences. It was noticeable that when being aggressive with the throttle in muddy conditions that the Triumph would rev and spin where the twins, with more grunt, would dig in and so push ahead more securely. And so where maybe you'll find a tricky slope to climb then the Explorer will need a lot more finessing than say the GS. But, by no means, was the big Explorer ever a fish out of water, it was coping with extreme conditions very calmly.

It's interesting to note the Triumph runs on a narrower rear rim to most 1200s, making for a 150-section rear tyre (*where the GS adopts a 170-section*), matched with a 110-section front. Interesting to note, but unremarkable otherwise, the handling felt solid and predictable, reassuring.



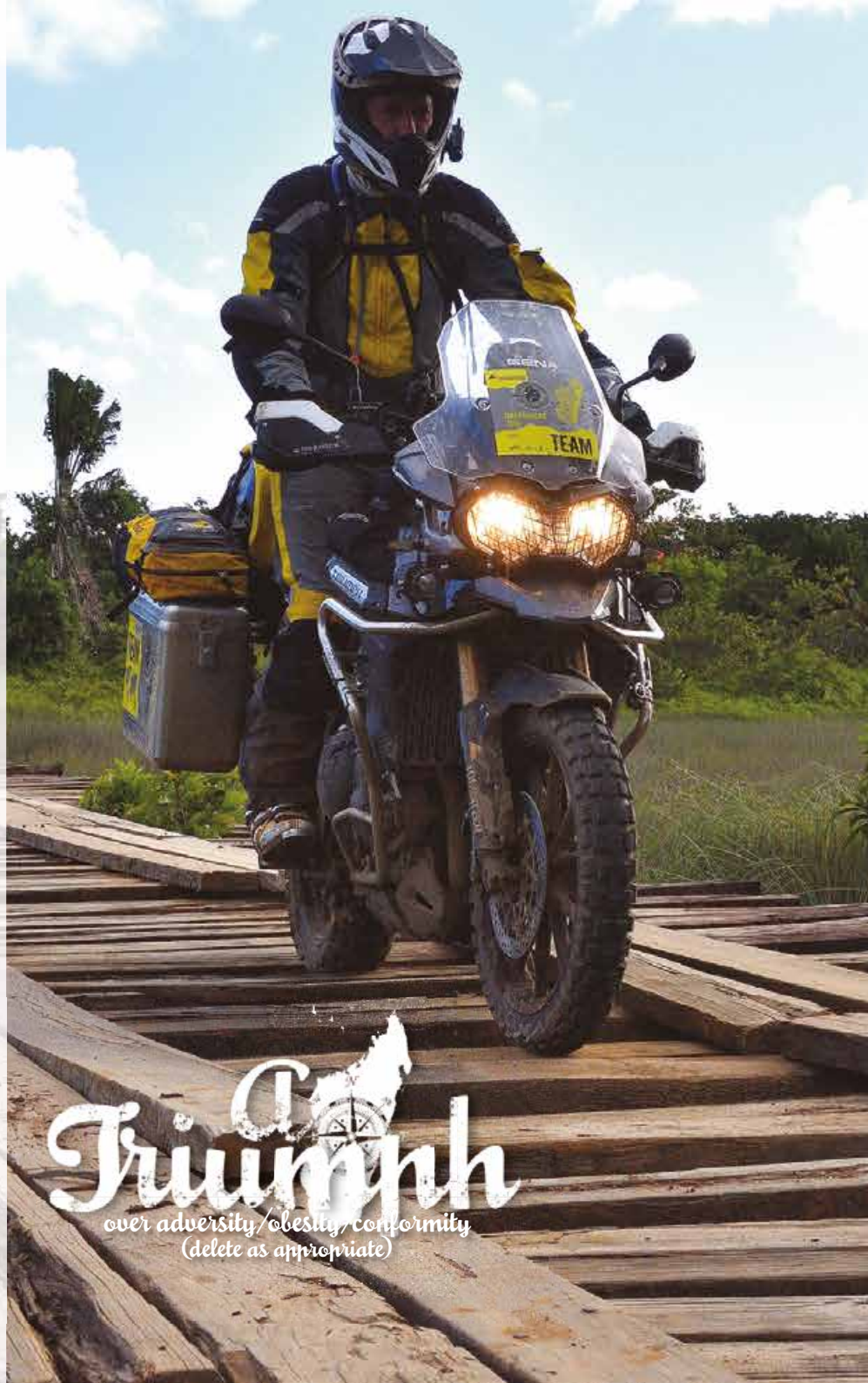
Extreme Test

THE SAND MASTER!

Oddly enough the Explorer rose to the head of the pack in the conditions where you'd least expect it – in deep sand. Here, with the traction control off, and having popped a couple of brave pills, you could rev the proverbial nuts off the triple and it would fly along, the motor and sheer weight beating the sand into submission. It was a touch do or die – not what you might call a sustainable modus – but fact was the Explorer could handle it, the front didn't tuck or dive, and for as long as you could keep the throttle pinned it would stamp its authority. Given also the howl from the exhaust it made for quite a visual and aural display, vastly flattering the rider, and impressing the locals!

The Explorer also proved itself tough. Dropped into deep muddy waters – like knee deep when stood on the pegs – it would motor solidly through and all the mud, silt and water it simply shrugged off, with no resultant electrical issues. And once you got the hang of the highish centre of gravity you could ride it trials style around obstacles too. It took a serious amount of alluvial carnage to stop it. And when dropped, twice I think, it survived without damage – no doubt thanks in some part to the Touratech bars and panniers.

By the end of the ride I'd totally bonded



Triumph
over adversity/obesity/conformity
(delete as appropriate)

SPECIFICATION

TRIUMPH TIGER EXPLORER 1200

Engine: Liquid-cooled DOHC, 12-valve transverse three cylinder four-stroke

Capacity: 1215cc

Bore & stroke: 85x71.4mm

Claimed power: 135hp at 9300rpm

Claimed torque: 89lbft at 6400rpm

Compression ratio: 12.0:1

Fuelling: Multi-point sequential electronic fuel injection

Ignition: 12v, digital

Starting: Electric

Transmission: Six-speed

Clutch: Wet multiplate

Frame: Tubular steel trellis

Front suspension: Kayaba 46mm USD telescopic forks, 190mm travel

Rear suspension: Kayaba (Touratech ACE) monoshock, single-sided swingarm 194mm travel

Front brake: Twin 305mm discs, Nissin four-piston calipers, ABS

Rear brake: 282mm disc, Nissin twin-piston caliper, ABS

Tyres: 110/80-19, 150/70-17

Weight: 259kg

Seat height: 837/857mm

Wheelbase: 1435mm

Fuel capacity: 20 litres

Top speed: 215km/h

Contact: www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk





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(delete as appropriate)

with the Explorer, loved it like a brother you could say. It's not perfect (*who or what is?*) but the fact it's something so different, so individual, adds to its appeal. And when it matches a GS punch for punch on the trails you have to give it credit. I was struggling to make anything like a list of '*hates*' or shortcomings by the end of the ride. I'm not a fan of cast wheels on adventure bikes, but Triumph have addressed this with the latest model with wire spokes (on the XC models) just like everyone else. I didn't appreciate the fiddly electronics controls, but these too have been comprehensively rethought and redesigned on the latest – and so now the bike remembers your settings.

Yep, against all my pre-conceptions, the Triumph won me over. I loved it and never once felt short-changed, didn't find myself wishing I was riding one of the other bikes here. It stood shoulder to shoulder with the best and was never found wanting. And of course, the more it proved itself, the more I warmed to its looks. The Continental offerings might look more dashing, be more integrated, or come with serious pedigree, but the Triumph's brutish attitude, and sheer willingness, has its attractions. From being a bike I wasn't ready to take seriously, I've got to give the Explorer 1200 a solid endorsement, it in fact feels and responds like a proper dirt bike, albeit a super-heavy one. And for that reason, it is an authentic adventure bike.





Triumph
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(delete as appropriate)



TRIUMPH TIGER 1200 EXPLORER
WHAT'S HOT
Soundtrack!
10,000 mile servicing intervals
Solid build quality
Individuality
Powerful 950W generator
WHAT'S NOT
Not as punchy as a twin
Heavy!
Aesthetic



Adventure Bread

Mission
Madagascar

THE FOOD

EATING WHEN IN the wilderness can often be a pretty basic experience – tinned beans and a brew? That's what we thought we'd experience in Madagascar. That's before we understood we had two budding master chefs on the team. Evening meals turned into culinary adventures all of their own. And when the action stopped just long enough to play still more, they made bread! Here Benjamin Myers & July Behl explain how to bake bread over an open fire...

Leavened loaf

Benjamin: "With a day of confinement to camp, July and I decided to be bakers for the day. Flat bread and two leavened loaves were on the menu. While July chopped onion and garlic for his flatbreads, I kneaded my dough for 15 minutes. I put two loaves in two different pans to let them rise. During that time, July cooked his flatbreads in a skillet. He then proceeded to fry them with a little olive oil. They came out absolutely delicious, thanks to the combination of spices he used. Crunchy and moist with a kick of heat."

"I put my first loaf in the fire and covered it with embers. Being the first time I attempted this I was unsure of cooking times. The first one burnt a bit but I learned from my mistake. The next loaf came out beautifully. We served it with an olive oil and garlic dip."

"The exact recipe? Six cups of flour. 2-3 cups of water, I think (can't remember exactly as I did it by feel!) 2 tablespoons of salt and one of sugar. One packet of yeast. Mix well, knead for 15 minutes. Split dough into two loads and place in pan. Let rise for 1-2 hours. Put in coals covering as much of the pan as possible. Also add coals or hot sand to the top. Bake for 20-30 min. Take out and let cool for 5-10. Serve and enjoy."

Flat breads

July: "When in doubt, either cook and eat food or ride motorcycles. As we were waiting for the boat to take us south and weren't doing the latter, it made sense to do the former. Benjamin and I were bakers for the afternoon and it was brilliant. I made the poor cousin of an Indian bread called 'missi roti' which originally has two different kinds of flours – wheat and chickpea – and has garlic, green chilli and coriander and is more often than not fried in clarified butter as a final touch. My Touratech bread was made with wheat flour, salt, chilli flakes, a hint of lemon pepper and onions. All the ingredients go in the dough at the kneading stage post which one makes wee balls, Flatten them and cook them in the pan till the dough is cooked."

"I wasn't sure if the bread would be well received but it went down a treat. I think a lot of that was because of my glamorous apprentice Andrea who not only helped in cooking the breads but did a cracking job of serving them as well. Bon Appetite!"



Tested

This being a Touratech ride, and with Touratech now being so heavily invested in rider clothing as well as motorcycle equipment, it stood to reason that all riders would be fully Touratech equipped. It's top quality stuff...

Words: Jon Bentman

JB's UPoA Kit





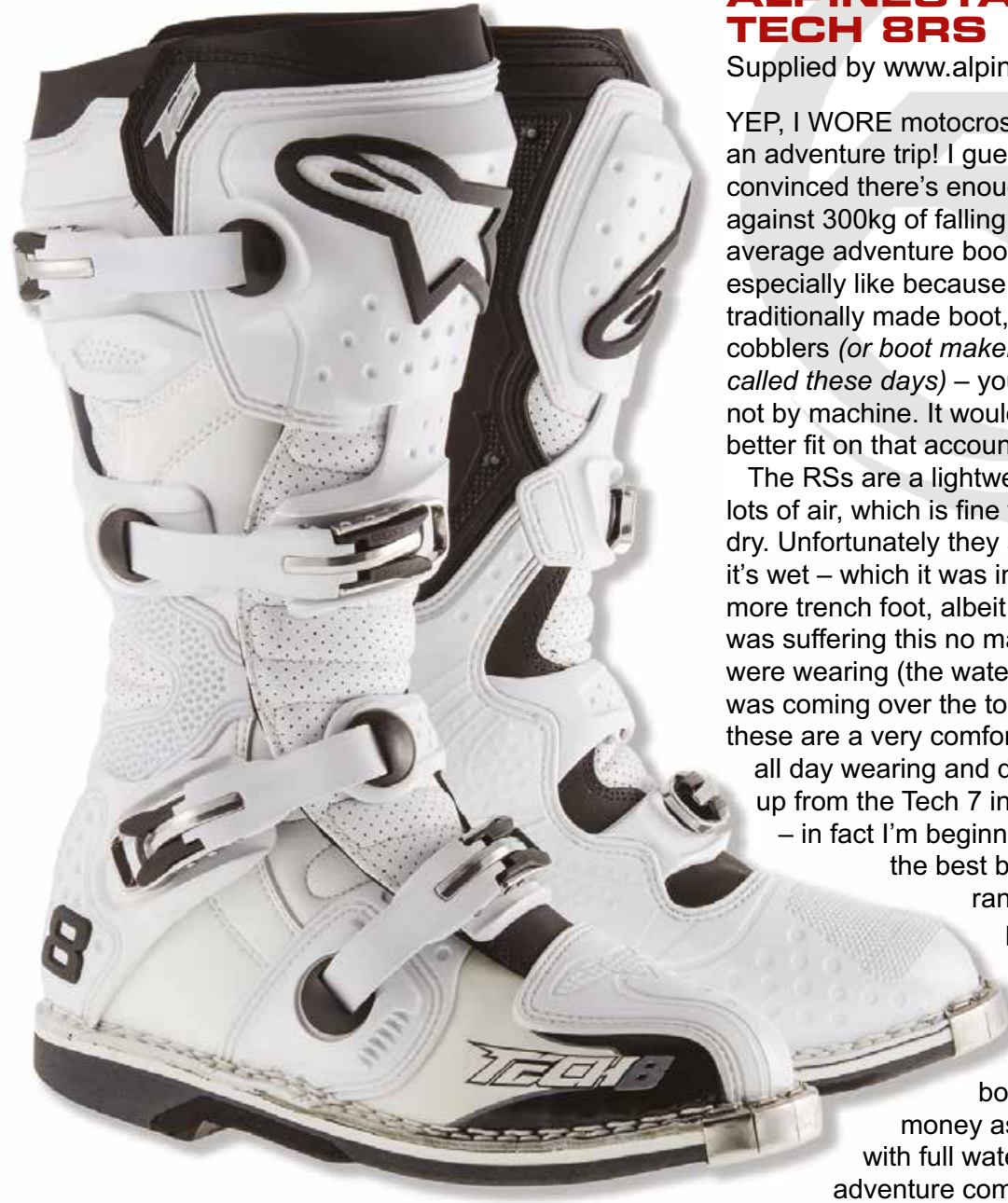
THE COMPAÑERO

Supplied by www.touratech.com

WE'RE ALL VERY familiar with BMW's Rallye suit – well, this is effectively Touratech's answer to that. They've adopted very different solutions to the same design issues. For a start the cut does seem more figure-hugging than the BMW Rallye, the pants especially close-fitting to the thigh and so at speed there's less fabric flapping around than you often get with textile suits. There are no zips to let cooling air in as the whole suit breathes on account Touratech have specced Cordura Air Flow Technology (AFT) fabric for many of the panels front and rear, on the pants and jacket, while key points where you're likely to need wear and tear resistance are backed up with the tough Cordura 2000 fabric. And yes, the AFT stuff works, it is a proper air-flowing suit – which is why it's called the 'Worldwide Summer'. Only in the severest heat and in the most stressful slow-speed going was it too hot – conditions we did encounter in Madagascar. There's CE-approved body armour in all the usual places, but it seems less bulky than the BMW equivalent and the knee pads especially are better for being smaller and for not ending up hanging down over your shin (*or boot*) as often seems to happen with the BMW suit.

Now where the BMW Rallye has a waterproof inner lining, the Compañero relies on a completely separate two-piece outer shell – the All Weather Add – made from breathable but waterproof Gore-Tex Pro Shell 3-layer, which zips over the Worldwide Summer. It's got some fancy full-length zips on the legs of the pants to aid this procedure. The positive here is that the cold and the wet are totally sealed out, making the two suits together much warmer than the BMW Rallye. The downside, of course, being you have to stow the outer until such time as you need it. The outer also comes with a pretty comprehensive, but neatly integrated, set of 3M reflective panels that make it highly visible at night.

Altogether the Compañero is one very sophisticated, high quality bit of kit. And if yellow offends as a fashion statement, then you can always buy the black version, which actually – with grey detailing – looks very sharp.



ALPINESTARS TECH 8RS

Supplied by www.alpinestars.com

YEP, I WORE motocross boots again for an adventure trip! I guess I'm just not convinced there's enough protection against 300kg of falling metal in the average adventure boot. The Tech 8s I especially like because they are a traditionally made boot, made in Italy by cobblers (*or boot makers, whatever they're called these days*) – you know, humans, not by machine. It would seem we get a better fit on that account.

The RSs are a lightweight design, flowing lots of air, which is fine while the going is dry. Unfortunately they ship a lot of water if it's wet – which it was in Madagascar. So more trench foot, albeit just about everyone was suffering this no matter what boot they were wearing (the water being so deep it was coming over the top). All that said, these are a very comfortable boot even for all day wearing and do feel to be a step up from the Tech 7 in terms of protection – in fact I'm beginning to think they're the best boot in Alpinestars' range. If I was a more practical sort, then for sure I'd be considering Alpinestars' Toucan Gore-Tex boot instead. Same money as the Tech 8s but with full waterproofing and adventure comfort as standard!





SCOTT HUSTLE GOGGLES

Supplied by www.scott-sports.com.com

THE SCOTT'S WERE brought out again for another adventure. There was one point when I swapped to a helmet with visor, for a photo call, and immediately wasn't happy – there's just something that doesn't feel right to me putting a visor on for dirt, it's like sitting behind a car's windscreen.

As it was, the going was so slow and it was so humid (often simply teeming down) that often as not I was riding with no goggles at all. But the Scotts were good when used, I value the optical quality of their lenses and this is always useful when you're riding tricky terrain. As said before, they let enough air to circulate to stay pretty fog clear in all but the sweatiest of going

TOURATECH AVENTURO HELMET

Supplied by www.touratech.com

THE AVENTURO IS expensive by off-road helmet standards, but not by road standards. Part of that expense is on account of the carbon fibre shell which gives maximum safety value. The Aventuro looks off-road but you soon realise there are plenty of adventure details to it. Like the peak which is aerodynamically designed so it doesn't work at lifting your head off at high speed. The helmet is also designed to work with goggles or a visor system (*with pinlock*), and the interior is removable for cleaning. And there are indents in the interior ready to take a communications system and there are options on the venting including snap-in snap-out covers on the chin piece. There are even video camera mounts included in the accessory kit it comes with.

It's superbly comfortable, well-finished and just gets on with the job. Like any good helmet you end up forgetting about it, you just ride. Only item I don't like is the clip on the back for the helmet strap – it's superfluous in these days of silicon-lined goggle straps.





SENA 10C BLUETOOTH CAMERA AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

Supplied by www.sena.com



THIS SYSTEM CLIPS neatly into the Aventuro helmet, with the correct size holes for the speakers set into the Aventuro's liner, there's even a little channel for the mic wire to be pressed into. It's a neat unit that's pretty simple to operate. Press two buttons and a North American woman pleasantly says 'hello' in your ear piece. She's there most of the time in fact, telling you when you have the camera element live, when you start filming and when you stop, 'recording stopped' she says. You do end up talking back to her, of course. Kind of fool proof system though.

The video camera isn't bad, if you were a super-fussy Hollywood film maker you'd say it's not quite film standard, although footage shot by these cameras has been used in Touratech's documentaries and look fine to a less educated eye. The stills camera certainly doesn't pass muster, though – the file sizes are simply too small (*to be corrected on the next redesign*).

As a communication device the Sena 10C is excellent. Crystal clear speakers, at least until the speeds get high. At high speeds with visors it's still working well enough but wearing goggles was creating too much of a blast around the mic in the chin piece to get decent audio.

The value of the comms on this trip was immense, being able to warn riders behind specifically of obstacles and dangers, and to be precise rather than making vague hand gestures. Other times it was neat just to have the company and we'd have some gentle conversations going when the terrain was less taxing. As well it's possible to link up to four headsets. We found three worked best with least chance of talking over each other. Range seems to be limited to line of sight, if you disappeared behind trees you generally ceased broadcasting, prompting calls of 'come in red leader, come in...'.

Comms systems can be a hassle. Wires, limited battery life, indifferent performance etc. Not with the Sena, bluetooth means you're not connected to the bike, a charge lasted all day (*12 hours*) in comms mode but needed boosting if you filmed too much. It's a very good set-up.





The UPoA scene by scene...

STEP IN TIME

All six of the UPoA rider plus a couple of imposters take time out while the kids at the school and orphanage are called from their classes.



Photos by Herbert & Ramona Schwarz & Robert Davies

SHIP TO SHORE

Andrea Box's Triumph Tiger 800XCX is swung from deck to dock. With just 24 hours before the arrival of Andrea and the other UPoA riders, Herbert Schwarz had a short time to ensure all 13 bikes were ready to go. Not an issue for cool calm collected Herbie...



PUDDLE JUMPING

The rainy season was apparently over. Only it wasn't. At first it rained at night, then it rained at night and half the day. Then all day and all night it seemed. So the trail was 50% liquid.



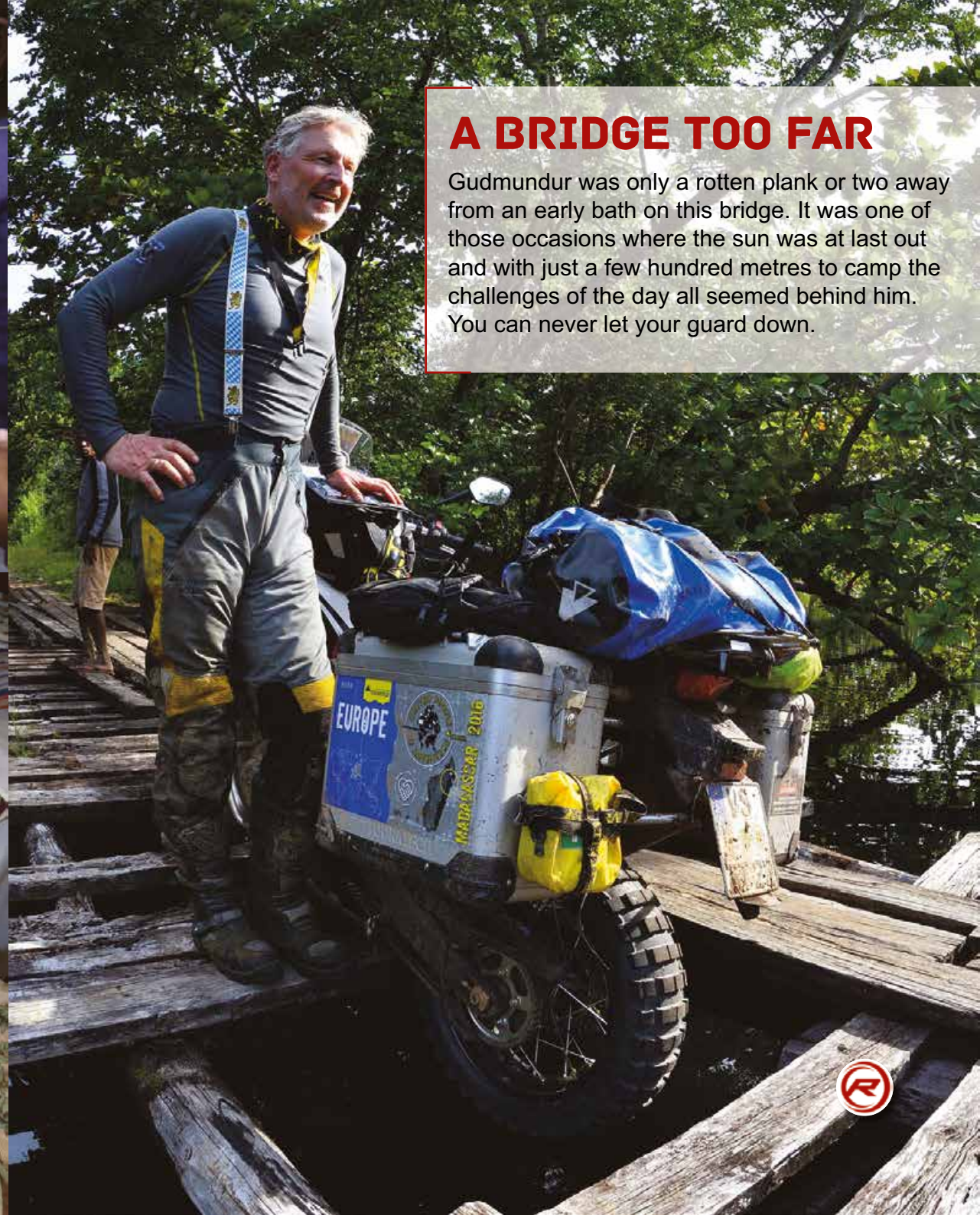


YAHHH!

Ramona roars at the children – it would seem. The kids were unbelievably well mannered and very keen to connect with their visitors.

PERSPECTIVE

No Xbox, no Playstation, but all the kids had big smiles and enthusiasm, kind of puts thing into perspective doesn't it?



A BRIDGE TOO FAR

Gudmundur was only a rotten plank or two away from an early bath on this bridge. It was one of those occasions where the sun was at last out and with just a few hundred metres to camp the challenges of the day all seemed behind him. You can never let your guard down.



TAKING A PUNT

When the puddles got too big this was the only way forwards. July and Ramona enjoy the break. Girl in red jeans and check shirt rode pillion with us most days, this being her version of adventure riding attire. Who was right, who was wrong?





LOOK INTO MY WORLD

This young chap appreciated the quality of the Scott goggles. It was quite unsettling the yawning chasm that sits between his world and ours. Will he find the same opportunity as our sons?



FORGET THE BRIDGE

It's not much of a bridge anyway, just a few planks to keep the feet of the locals a little drier. So the 300kg GS ploughs through the mud and water instead. Herbert plays dray horse.





AT HOME

The two Africa Twins were surely at home on the African island of Madagascar. And they were. Both Kurt Yaeger (*American actor and presenter*) and UPoA man Gudmundur loved their Hondas, enjoying the agility this bike has over the heavier options.





STANDING PROUD

Just a few kilometres from the end. The Ducati amazed us all. It took everything that was thrown at it, and everything it was thrown into – as you can see here given the mud coating. Ducati really have built one tough mudder.



SURGICAL SPIRIT

Photographer Robert Davies is a surgeon back in Perth, Western Australia – but he's looking like a Touratech mannequin here. Coconuts were typically our only drink (*other than bottled water*) during the day. The flesh (*which Gunther's attacking*) our only meal (*until the evening's fine dining*).

TWO OF THE BEST

Between the GS Trophy and UPoA we've learnt to respect the capability of the fairer sex when it comes to adventure riding. Andrea (*left*) was one of the best riders in the group, Ramona had it all licked except stopping – her bike being so tall and so heavy (*a full-height F800GS*) it was a job for her to hold it upright. She has '*tuck and roll*' down to a fine art. Both were dead keen to carry on south, hurricane or not...





MY HEART WILL GO ON

Poor Andrea was put up to this. Note fractional freeboard, one half-decent wave and this lot would have all been swimming.



OMAR'S END

Broken bones suck, even more so in the middle of the wilderness of Madagascar. It was seven days before Omar's broken fibula was plated at home in Alexandria in Egypt. In between Omar unwittingly found himself in the hands of a witch doctor who placed a poultice on his leg – he later woke to find thousands of ants hungrily devouring it...

DUDE

Part of the 'Moto-Taxi' as Herbert called them – the guys who carried the film camera gear on their 125s. Quiet, patient, ever helpful. They admitted later that they thought us a bunch of nut jobs at the start, but respect grew when they saw we'd not give up on any challenge. They were right though – we were mad.

SMILE OMAR

No image could portray just how gripless this mud was. Omar was an early victim. He later spoke of the kindness of the group in coming to his aid whenever he fell, but the media team (JB and J-P) on this occasion are more intent in getting the shot.



Back Issues



RUST
WWW.RUSTSPORTS.COM



www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0K02x9reL0



www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrOoVPEK1_E



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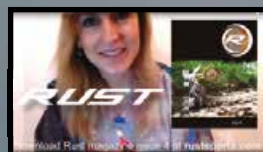
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ISSUE #1



AFRICA TWIN SPECIAL



ISSUE #2



HUSQVARNA 701 SPECIAL



YAMAHA WR450F SPECIAL



ISSUE #3



ISSUE #4



ISSUE #5



ISSUE #6



ISSUE #7



GS TROPHY SPECIAL



ISSUE #8



ISSUE #9



ISSUE #10



ISSUE #11

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