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RnineT**



RUST



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BMW





HERITAGE?

BY JON BENTMAN,
PHOTO: JB

AS I WRITE this, there's a mad rush going on. The Welsh Two Day Enduro starts in just two days' time – and am I ready? No (*part one*) – the magazine deadline is bearing down, words and images (*and design*) need to be sorted before I leave; I need to be packing stuff, but work has to come first (*same for all of us*). And is the bike ready? That's again No (*part two*) – I've run out of time, so for sure there'll be compromises in the preparation. The bike will just have to go as it is, on the tyres it came with (*and that means tubes, not mousses*), with a few things that'll just have to be as they are. Heck it's not even properly clean (*oh, the shame*). But hey, it's a Yamaha WR250F, these bikes are ready even when they're not. Yeah, I'll give it an oil change, stick on the numbers and go!

There's a 65-year history to the Welsh, I like that the event has such a history. The changes over time have been fascinating, generations of riders have come and gone, but the event endures. This issue we're looking at such heritage in a moto form. There's been a recent shift in the motorcycle market that's seen the genesis of a whole new range of bikes. It's not like we haven't had retros before (*bikes like Kawasaki Zephyrs and Ducati Sport Classics spring to mind*) but this time it seems it's the riders that are leading the trend, not the manufacturers. A trend for customizing old 70s bikes,



making cheap, simple stripped down roadsters has led to the factories creating their own brand new equivalents.

One aspect we've noticed – these bikes, both the modified originals and the new factory-built creations – often appeal to dirt bikers as much as they do the road crew. Many of these bikes share a riding position similar to what we've known in off-road, wide-set handlebars, upright seated positions, it's like they're dirt bikes for tarmac. And so we've noticed quite a few dirt guys getting involved, like our mate Martin Craven here (*WP suspension man for the UK and some time dirt bike tester*) who's created something of an homage to Honda's Elsinore motocrossers (*scramblers*) from an old CB500-4. You can't ignore stuff like that. And so RUST will take a look at these bikes from time to time – old and new – for they're clearly of mutual interest. Our publisher Warren, recently took something of a shine to BMW's R nineT and so that's up first. And by co-incidence another mate, July (*not Julie, he's a bloke, so that's July as in the month – I blame the parents*) from the UPoA has also been testing the nineT – as an alternative adventure bike.

Motorcycles are simply all things to all people, I guess.





HOT IN THE CITY

Gotta love the Extreme XL Lagares enduro, this year held 17-19 June – for it doesn't just bring enduro to the people, it runs enduro right through their back yards. A day and a night rampaging along the waterfront and seemingly up and down the alleyways of downtown Porto (*in Portugal*) – hey, who needs dirt?! – then a blinding day in the back country, it's one super-tough extreme enduro. This year won for the third time by Spaniard Alfredo Gomez.

**Image: Hugo Silva,
Red Bull Content Pool**





THE SLAYER

Two issues ago we reflected on the early days of Ken Roczen – teenage years, mom, pop, Germany, MX2 and all that. But his ‘now’ is simply incredible. Second half of the AMA SX season he came on so strong, certainly had champ Ryan Dungey on the ropes. And now in the outdoor, while Dungey nurses injury, Roczen is simply dominating. He’s taken some interesting turns in his career, made some decisions that the ‘experts’ have criticised, but he’s so strong now. Hopefully we’ll see him back at the Motocross of Nations this year (*he missed last year to have surgery on his back*). Strongest rider on the planet right now? Most probably.

Image: Garth Milan / Red Bull Content Pool



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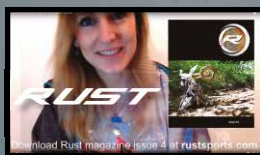
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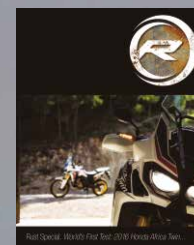
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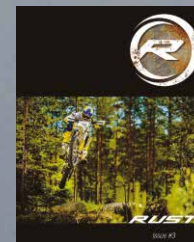
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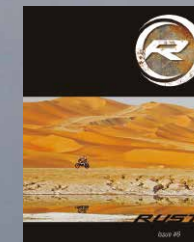
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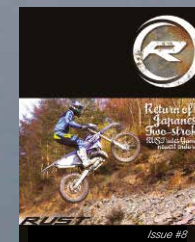
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BMW R nineT



RUST takes the BMW R nineT for a rip around the amazing ocean-sweeping roads of Cape Town, South Africa – and again in the hills and forests of the Schwarzwald of Southern Germany – and finds big love...

Words: Warren Malschinger
Images: BMW, Jon Beck and WM



Heritage

IT SEEMS ONLY fitting that our first test of what we at RUST term a heritage bike takes me back to my childhood in South Africa, where I first learned to ride. Bikes meant freedom to many a youth in SA, there's just so much room to roam, and with so much unsealed track or just plain wide-open land then wide-barred dirt bikes were the big attraction. Getting behind the bars of the nineT on a recent visit to the old country rekindled memories of some of those first experiences. The nineT is no dirt bike, but the (*apparent*) simplicity of the bike, the pared-back styling, the rorty exhaust note, it all reminded me of the good old days. And pretty much that's what these bikes are all about.

HERITAGE?

So what is a heritage bike exactly? JB has defined it (*loosely*) as anything from an genuine old classic bike to a 'modern classic' (as *Triumph* call them) – only in the case of RUST, with a leaning toward off-road. As with all things in life, JB likes to keep things broad-brush, but I can see we're talking anything from the Yamaha IT490 JB tested a few issues back, to a brand new retro-styled machine such as the R nineT seen here.

If there was any doubt about the nineT fitting the heritage bill this was quickly



BMW R nineT



BMW RnineT



dispelled by the admiring glances, even discussions, prompted by the bike, over the week I had it for testing in Cape Town. Seems the styling is as much a trigger for the wider public as for the riders themselves. And as for the off-road bias – well, yes, there are the wide bars, the spoke wheels, the cobby workmanlike look of the 1960s scrambler (*seen better in the 'Scrambler' variant of the R nineT that will be released later this year*).

WHAT IS AN R nineT?

Incredibly, for something that still seems so new, the BMW R nineT first saw light at the tail end of 2013, launched into the new-for-2014 show season as a celebration of 90 years of BMW motorcycles, hence 'nineT'.

The engine is an air/oil-cooled 1170cc unit as seen in the last GSs prior to the latest K50 'waterboxers'. But the chassis is unique to the nineT, a steel space frame notably featuring upside-down forks rather than the typical Telelever front end. The design/construction is described as both 'puristic' and modular by BMW, meaning it's a pared-back design allowing for personalisation (*using BMW's own accessories/options or others*).

Producing 110hp and weighing 220kg (*fuelled*) it's a lively performer for this sector.

LIKE A DIRT BIKE?

Coming off a KTM 450 EXC the week prior there is an adjustment to be made, but not

as much as one might expect. With the 46mm upside down forks and wide bars there's a sense of dirt bike coming from the front end. With instruments and switchgear kept minimal it looks a bit like a dirt bike once you're seated, too. And while the seat isn't anywhere near as high as on a modern dirt bike you still sit in a position more reminiscent of an off-roader, it's no super-sport.

The bike feels light and nimble and my immediate impressions are that this bike is all quality, simple but quality nonetheless. The cockpit is surprisingly familiar and the clocks are a throwback to the 1980s analogue (*needle*) speedometer and rev counters. The only piece of modern kit is the simple trip computer and menu sitting in between the clocks that is controlled by a switch on the left of the handlebars.

The 1170cc air/oil-cooled four-stroke flat twin fires on first touch of the button and the bike growls itself into life. The unique dynamic of the boxer layout can be felt immediately as you rev the bike and with the pistons pushing side to side the bike rocks back and forth. The sideways motion when stationary is not anywhere near as pronounced as it was on the previous heavy flywheel motors and once you're moving is non-existent.

“ The real ‘retro-look’ bikes will come later in the year when BMW launch the scrambler and a tribute to the classic and much sought-after R80G/S... ”



BMW RnineT



Now, anyone that's ever visited Cape Town will have fond memories of the plethora of winding mountain roads that encircle Table Mountain – it's surely a biker's paradise. Ideal for a retro-roadster (sorry, JB – *heritage bike*) such as the nineT. My road of choice is the Ou Caapse Weg (*Old Cape Way*) a short steep mountain pass that crests Silvermine and drops back down into Noordhoek. I'm tentative at first as I get to know the nineT's handling characteristics but the bike responds well and true to throttle and directional changes, the Paralever rear shock rides as firmly as the forks and by the time the road flattens out I'm feeling like I'm aiming into the apex of the corners with confidence.

BMW RnineT



AN ADVENTURE RIDER'S PERSPECTIVE



ADVENTURE ENTHUSIAST – and Touratech UPoA participant – July Behl owns and rides a KTM 1190R. But the simplicity and stripped-down styling of the latest 'heritage' type machines have him wondering whether these might make a better adventure bike than the giant off-landers we currently favour. RUST joined him for a test ride of the R nineT in the Schwarzwald in Southern Germany...

I never thought I'd ever say this but I think 'less is more' when it comes to motorcycles. Let's be perfectly clear, I'm not talking volume here – just size. I own a beautiful KTM 1190 Adventure R, which I love to bits and will not part with. Having said that, a recent motorcycle expedition in Africa (UPoA Madagascar) has raised a few questions. Questions on size, technology,

SCRATCHER

The bike feels lighter than the quoted 489lbs (222 kg) fully fuelled and this combined with the lively motor makes it an awesome bend swinger. The engine in this chassis simply comes alive. I like the solid bank of torque in the bottom to mid, but this last of the air/oil-cooled R-engines also has a honking top end that wasn't there on the earlier R1200 motors (*it having a similar DOHC four-valve top end to that of the HP2 Sport of 2008*) so it has a fully developed power curve and wherever you ride it in the rev range it's good, very good.

The chassis delights; I'd been riding the R 1200 GS in the days ahead of this ride and while that's one terrific bike you're never going to scratch around on the tarmac with it in quite in the same way as you can a roadster. And this is the nineT's forte. The whole chassis set-up simply works. The forks keep the front end true, the Paralever rear is nicely firm, the space frame means nothing flexes in the wrong direction. It's taught, and while the bike is low, ground clearance isn't an issue. And if you're getting in too hot the brakes are ace, and failing that just lay it over, chances are it's going to cling to the road – it may have old world charms but the capability is present day sports bike.

The nineT is a great scratcher then, but it's



setup, power, weight etc...

While the KTM is perfect to tour around, two-up fully loaded with the missus on the back, is it too much bike for one person for a big trip? For most it probably isn't – its big, orange and screams adventure. Me on the other hand – well, I'm beginning to have other ideas. Like, why not take a simple, turnkey, more manageable yet versatile bike. Enjoy the ride as opposed to the technology. Feel the engine and not go blind trying to deal with error messages on everything from the engine to tyre pressure to horn failure. Enjoy the sunrise rather than sit head-in-the-bike setting the bike in sports mode with the right traction control and ABS settings – you're starting to get the gist now.

Which is why I'm considering a BMW R nineT Scrambler. The new Scrambler will be a more off road orientated version of R nineT with a higher and upright-seated position but with exactly the same engine – the (*last generation*) oil/air-cooled R 1200 GS. The Scrambler isn't here yet, but the R nineT is, and finding one 'on test' at the recent Touratech Travel Event in the Black Forest (*Germany*) this was an opportunity not to be missed.

Now without sounding disrespectful to my KTM, I absolutely loved this bike. It was a hoot to ride. This bike was fitted with an aftermarket Remus 'can' that made it even better. There was real grunt to this bike – it had the strength of a bulldog combined with



BMW R nineT



the agility of a greyhound. From the word go, you could feel the torque – it just goes and as it has a small seat you really need to hang onto the bike. With a small frame – it looks half the height of a GS – the bike was sweeping through the hills of the Black Forest and was truly at home.

The tank was perfectly aligned to the seating position and is truly a work of art. And I loved that the essence of the bike is such minimalism – engine, tank, seat, wheels... Yet the ride is sophisticated, it instills confidence and whether stood at a traffic junction or doing 120km/h, you can really feel the engine vibrations. While this would be off putting to most, I loved it.

It can't be all singing and dancing and there's room for improvement. The seat – after 200km I was saddle sore. The mirrors weren't wide enough – something wider and less shaky would certainly help. And the bike was too small for my 6'2" frame. There's no storage capacity (*which of course is part of the brief with such a bike*) and unless you're girlfriend/wife/mistress is a size 10 or under, she'll end up on the road pretty quickly.

While the R nineT is a beautiful bike, it's certainly not one for me for the big Americas trip I have planned for 2017. I'm pinning my hopes on the Scrambler variant and can see myself in South America on one of those. If for some reason it doesn't meet expectations, then it's back to the drawing board in search of the best bike for me.

also a bit cruiser, a small bit GS. So it's a great platform from which to enjoy the scenery. Around the coastal roads I'm taking it in turns to ride fast then look slow. The road around the south peninsula covers around 100km until you meet Cape Point where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet. From here the road heads northwest past Scarborough towards one of Cape Town's world-renowned surfing spots, Long Beach. The last stretch of road from Long Beach back to the waterfront in the Cape Town CBD winds itself along the Atlantic coast and one of the world's most spectacular roads, Chapman's Peak Drive and then along Victoria Avenue past Llandudno (*one for the Welshies, there*) as it drops into Camps Bay around the headland and through Sea Point before our journey comes to an end. It's certainly one bucket list-riding destination. For the nineT, this is the perfect road.

NOTHING'S PERFECT

Now nothing in life is in fact perfect and so the nineT has a few personal upgrades I'd like to see added to round off the bike. The footpegs are in my opinion too narrow and I'd bin these for a wider platform. Likewise the rear brake lever would have to go, it seems weirdly out of place, as are the handlebars – which after a while don't feel to

Continued on page 16 ►



BMW RnineT



BMW RnineT



be the correct bend. These are the only two items of the bike that lack the quality evident in the rest of the machine. They work just fine and I'd be willing to look past these but if I were to own one, these would be the first two items to be replaced.

That's the beauty of the nineT, it's been designed for customisation and it has one of the most versatile bolt-on bolt-off customisation platforms of any bike on the market as BMW have taken into account the café racer customisation trend and enabled this through innovative design. There is the removable rear frame, enough space for six-inch rims as well as other options, including an aluminium tail cover for conversion into a single-seater, together with a custom rider's seat with R nineT logo. The options are endless but one of the first items I'd add is the slip-on Akrapovic silencer for throatier sound, custom look and reduced weight.

GREAT BIKE

By the end of the journey I'm in love with the nineT. The bike is not only sensationally beautiful but I feel like I'm riding a modern classic and since this was the aim of BMW in the first place I can only say that they have succeeded. What impresses me is the bike hasn't been designed in a vacuum but celebrates modern technology in a design



Along with the 'retro' bikes, BMW are offering a range of accessories, helmets and clothing...

BMW RnineT



born in the 1970's with the R90 S and R90/6. I'm grateful that the design of the modern R nineT maintains the purity of design inspired by these two iconic machines.

The attention to detail and care given to incorporating classic styling with modern and functional technology can be witnessed in every detail and dynamically around every corner and with every twist of the throttle. There is no doubt that this would be a fun bike to own and is as versatile in use as it is to customise.

BMW RnineT



SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Type: air-cooled, DOHC 8-valve boxer-twin four-stroke

Capacity: 1170cc

Bore x stroke: 101 x 73mm

Compression ratio: 12.0:1

Ignition: Electronic, 12v

Carburation: Fuel injection

TRANSMISSION

Primary/final drive: Gear / shaft drive

Clutch: Dry clutch

Gearbox: 6-speed

CHASSIS

Frame: tubular steel bridge

Front suspension: 46mm upside-down telescopic fork

Rear suspension: BMW Paralever

Front brake: Twin 320mm discs, four-piston calipers, ABS

Rear brake: 265mm disc, twin-piston caliper, ABS

Wheels: Wire spoked, alloy rim

Front tyre: 120/70-17

Rear tyre: 190/55-17

DIMENSIONS

Dry weight: 222kg (fully fuelled)

Wheelbase: 1476mm

Seat height: 785mm

Fuel capacity: 18 litres

PERFORMANCE

Top speed: 135mph

Claimed power: 81kW (110hp) at 7750rpm

Claimed torque: 119Nm (88lbft) at 6000rpm



Words: Jordan Wright
Images: KTM & Ian Chapman

This is 'Dispatches' where we throw the floor over to you, to voice your joys or your concerns. It might be about something you've read-in or seen-on RUST platforms. It might be something local to you that you'd like to share. Clean, reasoned debate, or fair observation. Essentially this a letters page, as we traditionally know from magazines, but with a little more direction.



IS THERE SUCH a thing as too fast, too light and too good looking? Reader Jordan Wright has transitioned from schoolboy motocrosser to weekend enduro warrior. He knows and loves dirt bikes, but he wonders whether they couldn't be both easier on owners and more environmentally respectful.

TOO FAST, TOO LIGHT & TOO GOOD LOOKING?

I see trail riding as an opportunity for me to be more opportunistic about riding dirt bikes than I can be as a motocross rider. To that end, two months ago, I ordered a 2017 KTM250EXC. Since, I have read the book *Let my People go Surfing* by Yvon Chouinard (YC). It offered some food for thought...

I've ridden bikes since I was knee high to a grasshopper, and surfed for a few months in Australia, Bali and Sri Lanka. There's a stark difference between surfing and motocross. Once the tide comes in and washes the footsteps away a surfer leaves no trace of their presence (*save for the carbon emitted making his board and wetsuit, for the pedants amongst us*). A comparable trail riding session can cause a noise nuisance, burn disproportionate amounts of fossil fuel and necessitate substantial maintenance activities.

My new KTM will be lighter, faster and better looking than an equivalent 10-year-old bike, but need it be? By 2005 most bikes had progressive upside down forks, stiff triple clamps, aluminium frames, powerful engines and linkage mono-shock rear suspension. Particularly the demand for lighter has resulted in brittle or malleable parts that bend or break beyond repair at the thought of a crash.

So why do we constantly demand lighter, faster and better looking?! I can guarantee every person reading this would have more fun watching motocross from 1995 than they would the 2015 MXGPs. Modern bikes are so fast that they punish mistakes and injure us and our heroes, but the racing hasn't got any better, nor the smiles any bigger.

Inspired by YC, here's a list of alternative things we should start demanding from motorcycle manufacturers:



My new KTM will be lighter, faster and better looking than an equivalent 10-year-old bike, but does it need to be?

Durability – We don't want the first chain and sprockets to wear out in two rides, or the tyres to lose their edge in one. We don't want our radiators to bend beyond repair when we topple over running the bike in (*genuinely happened to my 2014 KTM250SX*). Every part of the bike would ideally wear out at the same time, so there would be no need for new seat covers and plastics every 15 minutes, brake and clutch levers every 10 and handgrips every 5!

Fit – When you buy a road cycle, you are inundated with choice of frame, handlebar and saddle choices to ensure the bike fits. When we spend five or six times as much on a motorcycle we should not be expected to accept that one size fits all. That goes for suspension set up but also physical size.

Simplicity – We want to be able to rebuild our bikes from the ground up or at least fix it when up to our knees in mud and only have an adjustable spanner and a roll of duck tape to hand. We also want to rid it of all the nooks and crannies that make it borderline impossible to clean.

Environmental awareness – Durability and fit will inevitably improve a motorcycle's environmental impact because we won't have to buy some essential parts two, three or four times. Better still though, we want the fuel economy to improve, we want the plastics to be made of recycled alternatives and we want our manufacturers to educate us on how we can ride as sustainably as possible. Most importantly, we must demand that our bikes are quieter. The future of all motorcycling depends on this.

I am confident manufacturers can do this without the bikes getting appreciably slower, heavier or uglier, but we'll give them some grace if needs be.

Warren goes on an enduro-adventure ride in Portugal and is blown away by the experience. Incredible country and bike-loving inhabitants. Is this heaven on earth?

Words: Warren Malschinger
Images: WM & Horizon Adventures

What Land is this?



I'M ENCOURAGED (*if not slightly amazed*) at the behaviour we encounter as we pass through the countryside astride a fleet of dirt bikes on an organised three-day, 700 kilometre dirt bike odyssey run by Horizon Adventures. Through farmyards, to expansive cork plantations and quaint little towns we are greeted with a doff of a cap, or a smile and a wave from people we pass by. What is this strange, courteous, even friendly behaviour towards dirt bikers, what planet am I on?



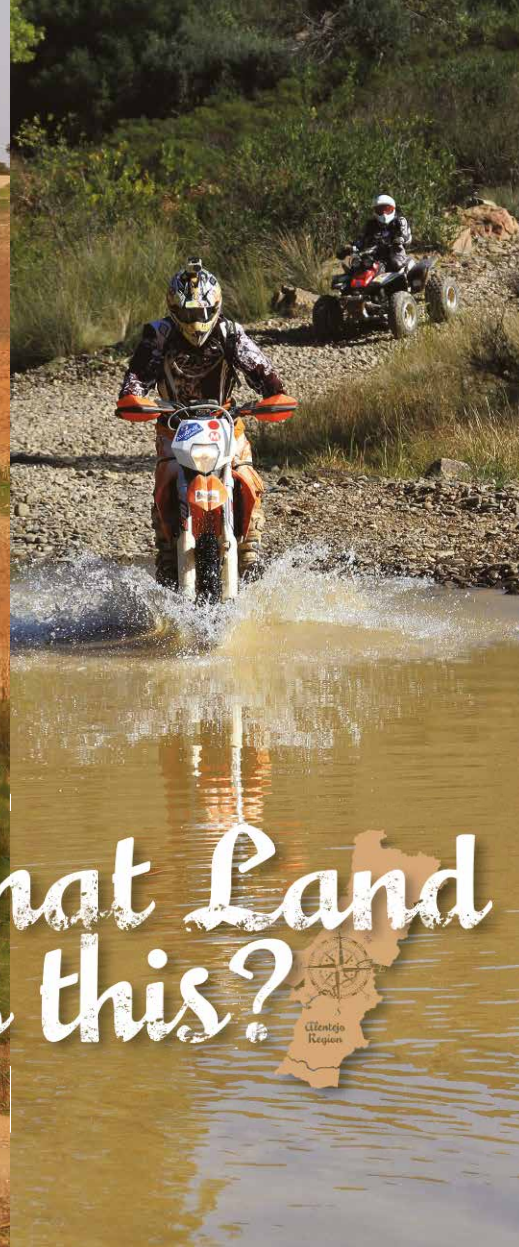
To top this off I'm told by my hosts that they have the official backing of the local tourism board who have helped them set up their dirt bike touring company. This help has included a finance package to assist them purchase their fleet of new 2016 KTM 450 EXCs. They have also provided a marketing budget to help them promote dirt bike tours in the region and have provided access to trails in areas closed to non-sanctioned operators. Not that they necessarily needed additional trails (*they've GPS plotted over 5000km of varied trails throughout this beautiful country since 2008*).

THIS ALIEN PLANET

This alien planet, or dirt bike heaven, is in fact Portugal and more specifically the Alentejo region in central Portugal and I've been by invited by Horizon Adventures, a dirt bike touring company set up in 2015 by two school friends Pedro Matos and Joao Soares to join them on their Trans-Alentejo tour.

Joao started organising the Trans-Alentejo tour for friends out of a passion for riding back in 2008. As Joao tells it, he visited Morocco with Motoaventures and instantly knew that this is something that he wanted to do in Portugal; there just wasn't anything on offer like this in Portugal... No one was riding off-road tracks with GPS. A few months after





What Land is this?



his trip to Morocco the first Trans-Alentejo became a reality, starting as a small event with some close friends (*800km in three days*). The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and Joao knew that the concept was on the right track. Each subsequent tour provided an opportunity for improvement and refinement until they were comfortable that every detail of the riding experience was of a standard that could be shared with other riders. It has grown into an annual pilgrimage with the number of riders swelling each year.

Unlike for me, this is not the first Trans-Alentejo for the majority of the riders on the tour. Many of them have been coming as many as six or seven times since its inception and a sense of community among the riders is pretty evident. This could have been pretty intimidating for a newbie, but I find it's rather the opposite, they bring a sense of a welcoming family and fun to us newcomers. As the only native English speaker in the group I could have easily felt isolated, excluded or intimidated but this is far from the truth.

Traditionally the Trans-Alentejo has been an event for local Portuguese riders. This year the large troop is made up of two Spanish brothers from Madrid and little old me, the rest of the group hail from all over Portugal, including Madeira. I feel privileged to be part of such an authentic experience in Portugal, riding with local lads and being so warmly welcomed by everyone. I hasten to



Adventure

add that this tour is unusual as most of Horizon's tours are multicultural with the majority of clients from northern Europe, the UK and even the USA and Australia.

Horizon offers a number of different touring options. Most are between two-five days in length and offer the option to ride your own bike or hire one of Horizon's KTM 450 fleet. The tours cater for the needs of both beginners and experts alike. The GPS navigation they use allows everyone to ride at their own pace. Experts, rather than waiting for slower riders, can set their own pace and for the less experienced riders they can ride within their limits rather than feeling rushed or pressured.

I would suggest that you check with the guys at Horizon about which tour would be best suited to your riding ability as some of the tours, especially the five day tour that take in the hills in the Algarve are best suited to more experienced riders while they have more gentle options for the less experienced or older adventurers.

BADLY KEPT SECRET

Horizon is based out of the world heritage city of Evora in the eastern part of Alentejo. Although Horizon Adventures in its current guise is relatively new, being set up in March 2015 they have a vast amount of experience



What Land is this?



of the local countryside. In local circles the Trans-Alentejo is a badly kept secret and was the catalyst that prompted the lads to formalise their business and start Horizon.

Since Joao's trip back in 2008, he and Pedro have maintained a good working relationship with Motoaventures and together the firms hatched a plan to work together in both Morocco and Portugal. In 2015 Motoaventures launched their first five-day '*Wild Portugal*' tour that was sub-contracted and run in conjunction with Horizon. Horizon in turn launched their first Moroccan tour using the Motoaventures infrastructure. From what I can tell this collaboration has been a success and has allowed them both to establish new markets with partners that share the same philosophy and approach to customer satisfaction and safety.

Each of their tours also caters for varying cost points with some of the less expensive tours having quite functional but still good quality accommodation and packed lunches while the longer and more expensive tours enjoy a step-up in the quality of accommodation with lunches at the best local restaurants along the way. Accommodation on Horizon's tours is double occupancy as standard so if you're travelling alone or just a '*hermy*' sort then I would suggest you request single occupancy early as this option is on a first-come first-served basis. The additional cost for single occupancy options ranges from around €20-40 a night.

What Land is this?



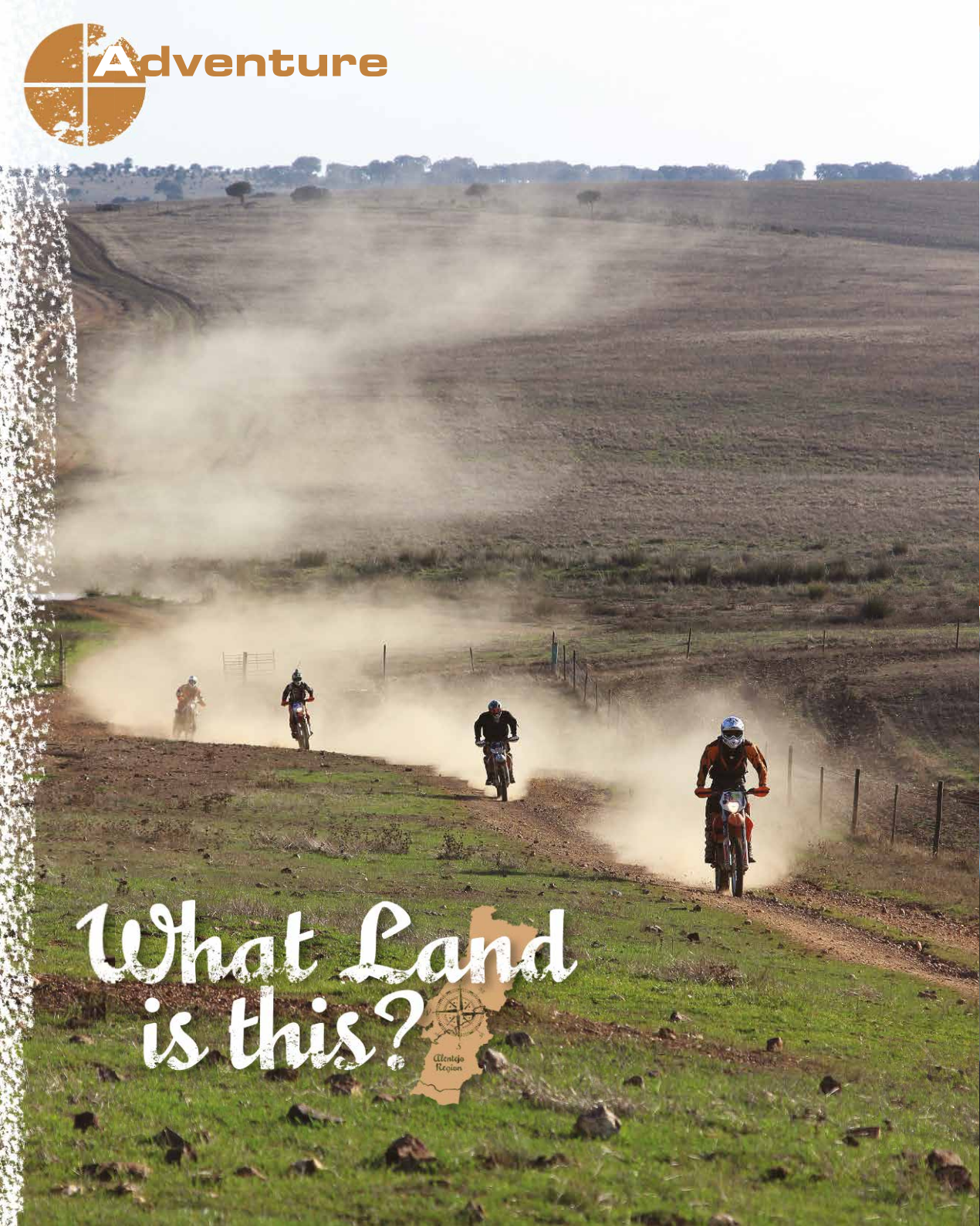
FOUR DAYS

So what can you expect? Here's my diary of my four days in Portugal with Horizon.

Arrival point is most likely to be Lisbon airport and Horizon can organise the transfer from here to the start point, about an hour's drive. I'm pleasantly surprised at the hotel. Its pretty nice lodgings and is a welcome change from the normal hostel or country inn us dirt bikers are used to, so I'm properly happy at this quality for the price.

Pedro takes me to see the 2016 KTM 450





What Land
is this?



Pedro



Joao

EXC which will be my companion over the next four days. If you're looking for a fleet of well-maintained bikes then Horizon can only be praised for keeping their bikes in pristine condition. Yes, I know they're new but given the amount of terrain they cover and the variation in skills of the riders using and abusing them then maintenance is key. My bike has just come back from a five-day tour, and has been turned around in a day and looks as good as new.

Although the Trans-Alentejo is a three-day tour which starts and ends at the Sobreiras Country Hotel just south of Grandola this Trans-Alentejo Tour is one with a little twist for me as I'll be riding a four-day tour along with Pedro and another of Horizon's clients (*Paolo*) who also wanted to do a little more riding than just three days. I'm surprised at the flexibility of the company to cater to their customer's wishes by customising the tour and adding an extra day for just two riders but I'm rather happy in this instance for the extra day in the saddle. So we'll start our tour in the city of Evora and meet up with the rest of the group that night.

As I'm finishing my set up in the garage my fellow four-day rider arrives with his tricked-out Husaberg FE390. After a very brief introduction (*he doesn't speak English and me no Portuguese*) we set off for dinner together, Pedro having prep work to do before we set out the next morning.

Dinner that night is one of those life events



Adventure

that I'll always look back on with a smile. I learn that Paolo also speaks French. Normally a second language would have been a huge help but my schoolboy French is woeful and is limited to about three or four phrases. I try Dutch and my stuttering of German but like me Paolo's at a loss so we resort to Google.

We spend the three-hour dinner chatting and getting to know each other through a combination of phrases, sign language and mobile phone translation apps. The food and wine is good, the company even better. We learn of each other's background, our families and a shared passion for bikes and come away from dinner new friends. It's this brotherhood that is such a huge part of what our sport / hobby is about. I head off to bed happy and expectant of a good ride in good company.

LIGHT TOUCH

I wake early, grab a quick bite, armour up and head for the garage. In the garage we're introduced to Ricardo, one of Horizon's mechanics and the man in charge of the backup vehicle. Pedro runs us through a pre-ride briefing that consists of the do's and don'ts, the behaviour that's expected throughout the trip – and Horizon's 'light touch' philosophy that they insist upon.





There is a long-term vision to improve and cement a positive opinion of dirt biking and dirt bikers in the region and they take this part of their riders' briefing pretty seriously.

The route for the day is just over 200km with a lunch stop planned after around 90km. All geared up the three of us head out for the first day's adventure. It's cold, surprisingly cold. There's a blustery wind that bites through my vented riding gear and although I'm wearing a full set of X-bionic base layer gear I realise that I could have done with an enduro jacket in these conditions.

Calamity comes fast. Two punctures in quick succession for each of Pedro and myself followed by Paolo's bike being held prisoner in a deep muddy bog followed quickly after by a seized rear wheel bearing that puts the backup crew into high gear. We've lost a good deal of time which means that we will have to crack on in the afternoon to get to our destination before dark. The unscheduled delays allow me time to fish out my Acerbis rain jacket. It does the trick as a windbreaker and reduces my teeth chattering.

At lunch I enjoy a local speciality, a delicious vegetarian pie called a Empada while the carnivores tuck into another local delicacy called a Bifas, or a pork prego to us. We set off after lunch at a bit of a gallop. The initial terrain is a mixture of wide swathes of thick beach sand which is fast flowing and awesome to ride. After a few miles this



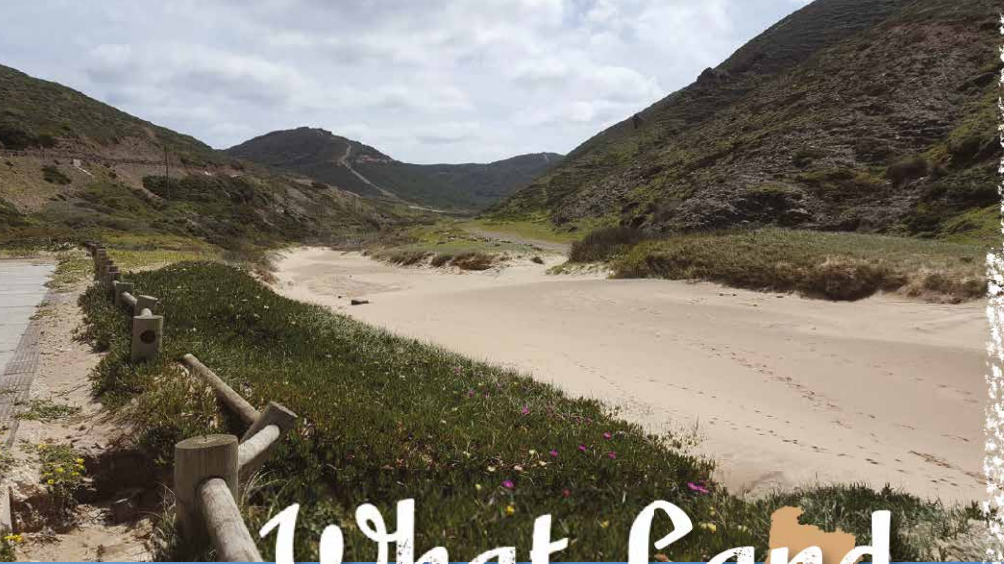
Adventure

morphs into deep sandy single track that is fantastic for those who love sand and an opportunity to learn to ride it for those who don't. The sand eventually dissipates into hard pack forest single track with flowing fast sections that turn hilly and really beautiful. I'm awed by the landscape as we approach the hotel, with the sunset casting the landscape with a orange and pink hue. The GPS indicates a 216 km ride.

We're met with a cold frosty as we dismount. There's activity all around us as rest of the riders arrive for the beginning of the official tour the next morning. Dinner that evening is at local café in Grandola and is a lively affair. After dinner we adjourn to the hotel lobby for a riders briefing by Joao. Each participant is handed a goody bag, which contains the following items:

- ID stickers for each rider as well as SOS numbers and the backup vehicle*
- A morning and afternoon ETA and rendezvous route card with zip-ties for each bike for each of the three days.*
- Endurance gels*
- A few small gifts including a buff that is most welcome*

Joao is careful to point out the backup strategy, rider safety and respect for the local inhabitants and surroundings. This is a big theme and Horizon takes this seriously,



What Land is this?



What Land is this?

being supported by tourism and locals alike they are keen to build a better image of bikers as a welcome part of the landscape. It's just good business for them to keep the trails open and us welcomed. Thankfully throughout the tour each rider adheres happily to the rules and we have nothing other than friendly encounters throughout the trip.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

The next morning we set off in two groups, each group with a guide leading the way. It's cold again, but that's quickly forgotten as we head off onto rocky washed out single track which becomes tight and technical with some rutted descents and an odd river crossing for the first part of the ride and then opens up into the hills with fast flowing single tracks which weave their way around the hills and down into through valleys and back up again. By midday we're pretty warm and stop for a packed lunch next to a dam – a welcome rest for most. We take about an hour's rest as the stragglers arrive and Pedro and Joao do a head count to make sure everyone's present. The sun's come out and the weather is perfect as we set off towards the coast after lunch and the resort that will be our base for the next two nights. The afternoon's riding is mostly flat with a good deal of gravel firebreak roads before giving way to some hilly terrain as we reach the coast.



Adventure

When we arrive at the resort the backup van and servicing crew are waiting for us and we're directed to the power wash bays. The bikes are parked in single file and each, following a good clean, are fed into the service area for an air-filter clean, chain lube and any other general or more serious maintenance that's needed. Horizon's attention to detail in maintaining their bikes is critical according to both Pedro and Joao. They have a new fleet and want to make sure that each new client has the best possible equipment to use.

This is borne out in their booking procedure. They take a €700 deposit from each client at the time of booking to cover any breakages. Their motto is that if it's not in the same condition at the end of the ride as they gave it to you at the start, they replace it (*at your cost*). The reason is that if you're arriving as a new client and a lever is bent or the grips are all torn you're not going to be impressed. This means that there's bound to be some arguments over what is charged for and what the costs are. If you're heading out for a ride with them you can be assured of the best quality equipment but if you break stuff then expect to pay for its replacement. Fair is fair as far I'm concerned but if I were to give them a suggestion then I would make this more clear at the outset





What Land is this?



(in the briefings for example) to avoid possible arguments later (*how many of us really read the T&C's?*).

The resort is a combination of bungalows and camping facilities with a shop and local restaurant. The resort is fit for purpose and each of us is assigned a bungalow with double occupancy. Its not quite the standard of the previous hotel, which was exceptional for a country hotel, but it's clean and the bed is comfortable – what more do you need?

Another really good night is had with dinner at the resort, a few beers and lots of laughter. I feel bad for the guys seated around me that have to break into English rather than Spanish or Portuguese to accommodate me but they do so with good grace and I'm pleased to share some good conversation. As we leave the restaurant it begins to rain and it's cold, really cold, three blankets with no heater and both Pedro and I are not having a good night's rest (*there was a heater, of course, but it was so well disguised that we didn't find it until the next morning*) so we froze our asses off while listening to the torrents of rain lashing the roof. Awesome traction – or chaos – the next day was all I could think of.

There's sun in the morning and we head off after a good breakfast at around 9am and it's straight into the mountains within 2km of the gate. I take it slowly as I ease into things, I'm still feeling the effects of the previous two days of riding and the terrain is deceptive with tight switch-backs, the ground's slippery as we

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ascend what could only have been a large quarry that's being rehabilitated and is now planted with trees – this is definitely no iron giant but it shares similar qualities as we wind our way to the top.

The riders spread out as each finds his rhythm. The GPS is working overtime on these switch-backs. It's great navigation practice. After about an hour the ground changes from mud to rocky loose shale as we head out into more open sun-baked ground. The track changes vastly from the confined slippery hilly slopes to fast firebreak roads again, big ascents, voyages of discovery into overgrown paths (*shows the depth of variation in tracks*) and an almighty river crossing for some of us that missed the bridge only a few meters to the right of the crossing. The water's deep and claims the lives of a few machines all within 2km of the end of the day's ride. Day two has been a cloverleaf course so we'll be spending the night in the same bungalow again. It's been a day packed with camaraderie, laughter, red faces and some heavy breathing all washed away with a few cold beers and tales of adventure. Another 196km today and my GPS shows 640km for the three days on the bike so far.

HEADING BACK

Thankfully we'd found the heater that morning so have a really good night's sleep. We wake to fog the next morning but it's not cold and I'm feeling a little fresher than I did the day before. We all



What Land is this?



load our bags in to the support truck, as the group will be heading back to Sobreiras Country Hotel where the tour began. I'm on a flight back to London, so I'll only do the morning ride and then say farewell to the others after lunch.

We set off at around 9am, turn north along the coast for an Atlantic adventure with some breath-taking scenery. I'm intrigued by the amount of people using the great outdoors side-by-side here in Portugal. Ramblers, trekkers, cyclist, surfers, campers, families, and holidaymakers all enjoying their part of this little piece of heaven. We then swing inland heading northeast. This part of this tour shares sections with Horizon's Atlantic odyssey tour, a five-day tour starting in the Algarve.

After a good lunch I say my goodbyes and head off to the airport in Lisbon. It's with a sense of sadness that I leave Portugal behind. Sitting at the airport I try and gather my thoughts on my experience. My emotions tug me towards a feeling of immense satisfaction tinged with a little loss as I head back to London on the red eye.

Portugal has over 300 days of sunshine a year and I found it to be a welcoming and intriguing place to visit from the cultural aspects to cuisine, and some cracking riding and breath-taking scenery. It might cost a few bob to ride a tour like this, but many will tell you, the quality of the riding more than justifies the cost. A great country and awesome riding.



Horizon Adventures

Check out Horizon Adventures website (www.horizonadventures.pt) for more information on their tours and dates throughout the year.

To get the best out of your tour do your homework and discuss your requirements with them. This will ensure that you find the right fit for you and last but not least, read their T&Cs. They are there to prep you on what to expect, what's expected of you and what is and is not included.

Horizon can arrange transfers from/to the Airport. A single transfer is around €120 from Lisbon to Evora – however most of the time shared transfers are available so make sure you request a shared transfer if needed. This is a big cost saver.

Note:

1: The personal and group security is a priority for Horizon Adventures. All riders must hold a full motorcycle-driving license that must be brought on the tour.

2: Horizon Adventures holds Liability Insurance, mandatory for all tourism organisers. In addition all the bikes are covered by third party insurance liability. Horizon also has a Personal Accident Insurance policy to cover riders on any of its tours. This cover is not unlimited and it is recommended that riders take out a travel insurance policy in their own country of residence including health care with repatriation to his or her own country, to be used in the event of an accident or medical emergency.

3: If you fancy the experience, we can't recommend it enough – and tell the guys you read about it in RUST!



Back Issues



RUST
WWW.RUSTSPORTS.COM



www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0K02x9reL0



www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrOoVPEKl_E



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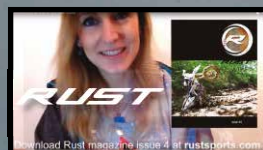
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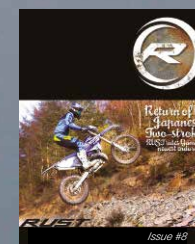
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