

## Homeward bound

After an exhausting eight months on the road, Sebastian Klein has finally completed his Munich to Bangkok ride, although the journey didn't end as he had originally planned...

Over the past months, Sepp has had to endure food poisoning, blistering heat and altitude sickness on his epic journey; however it was the recent well-publicised political demonstrations in Thailand that ultimately had the biggest impact on his plans. The country's capital, Bangkok, had been chosen by Sepp as the final destination for his journey some time before he departed Munich in May, however he couldn't have predicted the scenes at Bangkok airport in November.



Thousands of anti-government demonstrators halted flights in and out of the airport, forcing Sepp to reconsider his plans. With the prospect of an indefinite wait until flights started leaving the country, Sepp decided to travel back to Malaysia and fly home from Kuala Lumpur, but not before arranging the shipment of his BMW F 800 GS motorcycle back to Germany.

“The journey came to a pretty strange end!” remarks Sepp. “I got to within 50km of Bangkok and was having tremendous difficulty finding a reasonable price to ship my bike back to Germany. This, combined with a possible two-week wait to get a flight made me turn around and go back to Kuala Lumpur. Originally, I only had around 250km to ride from Koh Chang to finish my journey, however this soon turned into 2,000km as my plans changed.”

From the comfort of his apartment in Köln, Sepp reflects on the unpredictable conclusion to his marathon trip. “The riding during the last few days wasn't particularly



inspiring – it was mostly highways,” he says. “But I had a long way to travel, so I got in the saddle and just kept riding. I think one day I rode from 7am until 5am the following morning. I was becoming increasingly tired, and then I remembered what I had been told by a policeman in Northern Thailand earlier in my trip. He told me that if a tourist is tired from driving or riding, then the highway police will

offer them a couch to sleep on at the nearest highway patrol office. I soon found an office, but the police there had never heard of this! Nevertheless, they gave me a place to rest my head and then the following day I rode solidly to reach Kuala Lumpur.”

Once in the Malaysian capital, Sepp set about finding a company that was prepared to ship the F 800 GS that had served him so well, back to Germany. Although the diversion from Bangkok was an unforeseen problem, it did little to dampen his wish to complete his quest and return home having experienced the trip of a lifetime. “I hadn’t booked any flights in Kuala Lumpur as I have learnt on my travels that it is vital that the shipment of the bike is finalised before you make any travel plans yourself, as there could be delays with the bike, which would require you to cancel and rearrange flights,” he says. “I used the same company that I had when I had the bike shipped to Malaysia from India so there were no problems at all and I was soon on my way home.”



Sat in front of the television in Koh Chang waiting for news of whether or not he could fly out of Bangkok airport must have made Sepp feel a million miles away from home. As the situation unfolded, it became clear that Thailand’s transport infrastructure had ground to a halt and as a result, his plans were thrown into the air. But despite the impassioned protests that gripped Thailand, Sepp reveals that he didn’t feel threatened by the escalating political instability.

“I never felt in danger while I was in Thailand waiting for news from Bangkok,” he admits. “Koh Chang was full of tourists just wanting to go home. Although the atmosphere was strange, there was no trouble. Of course, there are worse places to be stranded, but after months of being on the move, I didn’t enjoy just sitting and waiting. However, the trouble in Thailand didn’t take the shine off the journey at all. It was just a few difficult days out of eight months.”

With over 25,000km of unforgettable riding now behind him, Sepp is currently adjusting to life back at home. The cold and damp conditions that faced him when he arrived in Cologne are in stark contrast to the sun-drenched beaches he left behind in Koh Chang. “It’s great to be back home, although it has taken me a few days to get over the jet lag and get used to the temperature in Cologne. It’s freezing!” he jokes. “I think I have slept in my own bed for three nights now, which is probably the longest I have slept in the same bed for over eight months. It doesn’t feel like I have been gone for that long, as the time has just flown by.”

Although the journey is now complete, there is just one more task facing Sepp before he can consider the adventure over. “The bike is due back in Hamburg soon, but I’m not sure I’m looking forward to riding it in Germany just yet – it’s far too cold!” he says.

“In all seriousness, it would be great to travel to Hamburg and pick the bike up and ride it home. It would be the perfect ending to this fantastic adventure.”