

New horizons for the New Year

Many of us will be having a leisurely start to New Year's Day following the previous night's celebrations, but in the case of Doris Wiedemann, nothing could be further from the truth. The German adventure traveller will be boarding a plane for New York on 1 January and starting a 15,000 kilometre, two-month trip that will see her ride around the United States, across Canada and then heading north through Alaska on a BMW F 800 GS.



Doris is no stranger to travelling, having completed some amazing journeys on two wheels. In fact, her first 'big' motorcycle trip took place in the US, where she spent five months travelling. It was this very trip that 'infected' her with the travel bug and led to many more biking adventures, including six months out in Australia; seven months discovering Africa; five months in Russia, Korea and Japan; three months in Kazakhstan and Mongolia, plus another five months in China.

The bike that carried Doris safely all over the world was a BMW R 100 GS/PD. With more than 200,000 kilometres of globetrotting to its name, her faithful and legendary boxer is having a well-earned rest and for this latest voyage, Doris has chosen the new F 800 GS after an extensive test at BMW's off-road training centre in Germany.

"I had a chance to test the F 800 GS in Hechlingen this summer and really enjoyed the power and the handling of the bike," she said. "I love the boxer engine of the R 1200 GS, but the F 800 GS is more than 20 kg lighter, which will be a big advantage on ice."

Ice isn't something that Doris will have to worry about at the start of her journey because as soon as she's picked up her bike from customs, she will be heading directly south from New York *en route* to sunny Florida, where the trip will 'officially' begin in Key West – the southernmost point of continental USA.

Comment [DW1]: The trip across three months in Kazakhstan and Mongolia, plus another five months in China were on a F 650 GS Paris Dakar which was turned into a TT39 by Touratech, with two additional petrol tanks etc. I thought, I would have to leave the bike in China and did not want to leave my good old R 100 GS there. So I took the F 650 which has a reliable reputation and would have had good selling value in China. But crossing the border was different than planned. I got the bike into China by paying a deposit and had to take it out again. Her name is "Redroundcheeky" (looking at the picture you have chosen, you will know, why.) and is now also sitting in my garage, waiting for me ... she has done a good job and gave me the confidence for driving a fuel injection bike. But if I have the choice, I prefer two cylinder bikes for travelling long distance.

With her travelling companion Sjaak Lukassen (a passionate globetrotter who explores the world on super sport bikes) they will ride west to see the Grand Canyon and then on to California to visit Ted Simon, the author of *Jupiter's Travels*. The journey then continues north to Seattle where they will cross Canada and take the Alaska Highway all the way to Prudhoe Bay, where they will hope to arrive at the end of February, before journeying back south to Anchorage to ship the bikes and fly home.

Comment [DW2]: The Alaska Highway does not go all the way to Prudhoe Bay. It starts in Dawson Creek (British Columbia) and ends in Delta Junction (Alaska). The last 670 km from Fairbanks to Prudhoe Bay are called Dalton Highway. I do not know if the roads in between also have names.



While no motorcyclist would object to riding in Florida's warm, dry climate, there surely aren't many who would take on the challenge of heading straight into an Alaskan winter? In a matter of weeks, the pair will leave behind temperatures of around 20°C (70°F) in Florida and will encounter freezing winds, icy roads, snow and temperatures as low as -40°C (-40°F) the further north they go. Not that this seems to bother Doris – on the contrary, she is looking forward to the challenge and is well prepared.

“ From past experiences, I knew that I did not want to face extreme cold alone. Also, crossing the snow-covered Ural Mountains in Russia with my R 100 GS/PD made me realise just how important it is to be able to touch your feet down on the ground on icy roads. For this reason, I will be using a special adjustable suspension system from Hyperpro that allows me to ride the F 800 GS with its normal ride height in the US. Once we reach snow and ice, I can lower the bike by up to 11 centimetres.

“To keep warm I've got plugs to connect my heated clothes to; as for additional power, I can connect a second battery that is in my panniers. I've added a switch so that I can turn off the headlight and use a Xenon light from Touratech; plus I've also fitted engine safety-bars, a larger windshield and handlebar-covers to protect me from the cold!”

To save herself the inconvenience of kneeling down in freezing conditions to grease the chain, Doris will use the Osco chain oiler. As for tyres, she will begin the trip with Metzeler Tourance rubber but as temperatures drop and conditions worsen, she will change them for alternatives that will allow her to mount decent spikes for riding on snow and ice.

Those who would like to send Doris Wiedemann a goodwill message can do so by visiting the www.doriswiedemann.de website, which is available in German and English language versions, and also includes details on the books she has published about her various travels over the years.

