

Kudu riders reflect on global adventure

Almost five months after Kudu Expeditions embarked on its first round-the-world trip, the dust is finally settling on what was an extraordinary adventure for all concerned. Divided into two groups, 27 riders paid for the privilege of Kudu's support and expertise on a memorable journey that covered 20 countries in 18 weeks. Now, as the riders return to 'normality', they can reflect on a truly life-changing experience.



Founded by former bomb disposal officer Lee Mears, Kudu Expeditions operates on the basis of offering 'normal' people the opportunity to ride motorcycles in some of the world's most remarkable areas. In light of the popularity of Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman's Long Way Down and Long Way Round series', Kudu developed the round-the-world adventure. The idea proved a huge success and places sold out in just ten weeks. Consequently a second trip, organised to satisfy demand, sold out in just two months.

On 4 June, the first group – all riding BMW motorcycles – departed on their long-awaited trip, followed by the second group a week later. Each team followed the same itinerary, which included such places as Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia. The final destination – New York – must have felt a very, very long way. However, after experiencing the ups and downs of life on the road, both teams completed their journeys and are now adjusting to reality.

"It's always difficult to readjust to life after returning from a long ride," says Douglas Kearney, 58, who was part of the first group. "But, I've signed up to a tour with another company in April, so at least I have something to look forward to! I work in IT, so getting out on the bike every day makes a refreshing change. When you're on the road, you

get into the habit of packing your bags every morning and getting back on the bike. It becomes addictive, so arriving at home always means a period of adjustment.”

Colin Tinnion, 49, who joined Douglas in the first group, is also finding the life at home an odd experience. “It’s very strange to be back! I can’t quite get my head around it,” he says. “It was so enjoyable and now it’s difficult to put it into words, which is hard because people keep asking me to!”

For those wishing to experience life on the open road, the privilege comes at a cost. Prices start at just under £20,000, however for this outlay, customers benefit from the expertise of the Kudu team, medical support, visas, border crossings and accommodation. This leaves riders with the difficult task of over four months of riding across some of the world’s most remarkable landscapes.



“Like most people that went on the trip, I had experience of motorcycle touring, but nothing on the scale of the round the world trip,” continues Douglas. “I have ridden in the United States and also around Europe. I’ve found that it takes about two weeks to get into the lifestyle of being on the road, so trips need to be longer to make sure you get the most out of the experience. I’m fairly busy at work so I don’t have the time to organise visas and even if I did have the time, I’m not sure that I’d know what I was doing! There’s so much organisation needed for a trip of this scale – the border crossings, places to stay and fuel stops all need lengthy research. To find a company that did all this for me was perfect. I had a fantastic time and was lucky enough to experience some magical places.”

With so many of the world’s gems on the itinerary, the groups were spoilt for choice when it came to picking their favourite destinations, but surprisingly some of the more remote locations feature heavily. “There were too many great places, so it’s difficult to name just one,” says Colin. “However, Kyrgyzstan was very special. There were many

times when we travelled over a ridge and came across fantastic views like the foothills of the Himalayas. The people in Russia were also very nice and it's an interesting place that I'd certainly go back to in the future."

Meanwhile Douglas points to the harsh reality of Siberia for his most memorable moments. "Eastern Siberia was particularly hard as for about ten days we had to cope with swarms of mosquitoes and green fly which would bite through our clothes and make things very uncomfortable," he confirms. "That being said, looking back I enjoyed the experience because it was so wild!"

Taking the homage to Boorman and McGregor to the next level, Colin and Douglas were members of the first group of riders who relied exclusively on BMW Motorrad machinery. While Colin entrusted his own R 1200 GS Adventure for the journey, Douglas took advantage of one of Kudu's fleet of rental bikes and rode a BMW F 800 GS for the duration. "The F 800 was brilliant for this kind of trip," says Colin. "I don't think any other bike comes close to its capabilities. I couldn't believe how quick it was and it was very practical, with good load-carrying abilities and was light and very fuel-efficient. I'm thinking of renting one for my next big trip to China."

As the pair continue to reminisce on an awe-inspiring adventure, Colin confirms that if you too are thinking of packing your panniers and heading off into the sunset, you should! "I would certainly recommend the round-the-world trip and adventure motorcycling in general," he concludes. "You get to see some of the most beautiful places on the planet and ride a bike all day, every day for over four months. It doesn't get better than that!"

Visit www.kuduexpeditions.com for more information on taking part in forthcoming journeys.