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In a New Year's special, **Amy Marwick** rounds up the 'who's doing what where' in 2013 of the motorcycle touring world

Fab Trips for 2013



Iceland's famous gravel riding

WHERE? ICELAND

■ **WHAT?** Delivering "package tours for people who hate package tours," Bike Tours UK (BTUK) promises to provide challenge and adventure, seeking out mountain passes, twisting trails and off-road routes away from Iceland's well-trodden tourist terrain. The company's run by adventure bike-riding devotee Bill Roughton, who personally plans and conducts all trips. Tours to Iceland are running throughout the summer in 2013 with choices varying from a five-day ride around the North West Fjords to a six-day Black Desert tour. The

fjords feature untamed and isolated natural beauty with jagged mountains, rocky coastlines, cliffs and valleys, and relatively easy gravel riding. ABRs will experience vast open space, 24-hour daylight, geysers, waterfalls and cold beers while relaxing in a hot pool after a hard day's ride. On the Black Desert tour, riders will tackle interior Iceland on the F35 and experience more demanding riding in Landmannalauger.

■ **MORE INFO:** Tours will cover up to 950 miles and widely feature gravel roads. Hotel accommodation can be organised by BTUK, but the tours are intended to include

nights in the wilderness, camping out under the stars. Booking information and potential dates are listed on the company's website; the departure of all BTUK tours is dependent on numbers. Bike Tours UK does not provide bike rental, but owner Bill is happy to help and advise those ABRs looking to hire bikes in Iceland.

■ **CONTACT:** www.biketours-uk.com

WHERE? MOROCCO

■ **WHAT?** Wildcat Adventure's Desert and Mountain Raid is an exciting overland tour showcasing the country's diversity, from the wilderness of the Atlas Mountains to the vibrant opulence of Marrakesh city. ABRs will pass through forest, desert and century old villages before taking a rollercoaster ride on the pistes of the Dra Valley through the largest palmeries of Morocco. Highlights include a spectacular ride through the volcanic mountains of Jbel Sarhro, past the dramatic Todra Gorge. Check out the infamous Erg Chebbi sand dune and ride through the High Atlas plains visiting the World UNESCO site of Ait Ben Haddou, the film set for *Gladiator* and *Lawrence of Arabia*. Accommodation will vary from hotels, to mountain inns, to ancient kas-

bahs (maze-like stone cities) and desert riads (a traditional Moroccan abode with a lush garden in the centre).

■ **MORE INFO:** The 13-day tour covers approximately 360 miles of off-road trails in over 1,700 miles of riding. Spaces are available in either April or October 2013 tours. The tour is designed for riders with a moderate amount of experience off-road and confidence on changing terrain. ABRs must bring their own bike or organise rental separately; Wildcat specifies a list of suitable bikes on its website.

■ **CONTACT:** www.wildcat-motorbike-tours.co.uk

WHERE? NEPAL

■ **WHAT?** British Bike Tours' (BBT) Shangi-La trip through Nepal is an adventure holiday in a Himalayan utopia. Home to some of the world's most elusive creatures, ABRs will explore steamy jungles, keeping an eye out for rhinos and tigers, and have the chance to travel by canoe and elephant in the Chitwan National Park. Riders can also soak up the culture visiting the monasteries, temples and the birthplace of Buddha at Lumbini, before sampling the cuisine and hustle and bustle of Kathmandu.

For the super adventurous there's even opportunity to try white water rafting and paragliding. Of course, no trip to Nepal would be complete without an integral mountain journey; participants will travel deep into the Annapurna mountain range on back roads and over mountain passes, under clear skies and sunshine – typical October-time weather.

■ **MORE INFO:** The tour is scheduled to depart in October 2013; it takes 15 days to complete approximately 620 miles of riding, mostly on tarmac roads. BBT can cater for any level of rider from a complete novice to the most experienced, with plenty of staff on hand. The price includes the hire of Royal Enfield Bullet bikes and accommodation in four-star hotels. An



Going wild in Morocco on the Desert and Mountain Raid



The thunder down-under!

itinerary and booking information can be found on the company's website.

■ **CONTACT:** www.britishbiketours.co.uk

WHERE? AUSTRALIA

■ **WHAT?** The idea of a land down-under conjures images of sprawling white beaches with turquoise water, bustling outback towns and endless, epic roads; ABRs will encounter all of this on Aussie Biker's Tropical Coast and Country Tour of Queensland. Riders can experience the vast and barren emptiness of the outback, riding side-by-side with kangaroos, and take the cable car into the Kuranda rainforest village, Cairns, gliding above the canopy over a lush, green wilderness. Highlights of the tour include a sunset dinner cruise on the Thompson River, a visit to the magical Millia Millia waterfalls, relaxing on numerous tropical beaches under palms, and exploring historic towns along the way.

■ **MORE INFO:** This 15-day guided tour sets off whenever there is a group ready to go. The months of August and September are always popular as the weather is generally ideal at this time. The tour covers a total of 3,230 miles on tarmac roads only, making it a relatively easy going tour. Accommodation is mainly in three- or four-star hotels. Aussie Biker has a large range of bikes available for rental.

■ **CONTACT:** www.aussiebiker.com.au

WHERE? SOUTH AFRICA

■ **WHAT?** For the nature-loving ABR, a safari in South Africa by bike could be the trip of a lifetime. Twin Cruiser offers tours starting in Johannesburg. The company's Protea and Leopard Tour takes riders on



Explore South Africa by road

an adventure hunting out the big five (elephant, lion, black rhino, leopard and buffalo). In addition to wildlife encounters, Twin Cruiser can also arrange a host of different activities along the route from a stop at the roaring Lisbon waterfalls, an exploration of Cango Caves or hike around Table Mountain

Riders will get the chance to sample local cuisine – and perhaps even brave a mouthful of mopani worm – a traditional caterpillar delicacy. Twin Cruiser supports Stop Rhino Poaching and donates three percent of its profit towards the project.

■ **MORE INFO:** The tour will finish off in Cape Town and covers approximately 2,890 miles over 24 days on rented Harley Davidsons. Three full days are spent at a private game reserve with all other accommodation in small hotels and lodges. Tours run year round but Twin Cruiser recommends avoiding the months of May, June and July; bookings can be made through the company's website. The tour is graded as challenging and riders must be able to handle heavy motorcycles on tarred road; about two percent of the trip is on dirt roads.

■ **CONTACT:** www.twincruiser.org/uk

WHERE? EUROPE

■ **WHAT?** For the city-hopping Euro-tour enthusiast, Moto Adventours offers an enthralling motorcycle escapade from southern Spain to the heart of the Czech Republic. The tour takes in the renowned cities of Barcelona, Florence and Innsbruck, among others, and takes riders to paradise on the islands of Sardinia and Corsica. Key sites along the way include the leaning tower of Pisa, Neuschwanstein Castle, and an essential stop at Munich, the beer capital of Bavaria. A trip like this wouldn't be complete without sampling the local delicacies in five different countries! The riding offers just as much variety with scenic, quiet roads and twisting, alpine switchbacks.



Stunning Spanish vistas

■ **MORE INFO:** The tour is scheduled to depart on 1 June 2013 and covers a total of 1,800 miles in 14 days. Riders can bring their own bike or hire one of a range of BMW bikes for an extra cost. Riders are required to have a minimum of two years' road riding experience.

■ **CONTACT:** www.motoadventours.com

WHERE? USA

■ **WHAT?** Cruise the length of the United States' Pacific Coast with Eagle Rider, crossing three states between Seattle, Washington and Redondo Beach in California. Riders will escape the rains of Seattle by ferry and spend the first day at the westernmost point of the USA at Neah Bay, enjoying the delights of the small fishing town and getting acquainted with the sea breeze. From here, participants will experience a dramatic range of coastlines from the colourful cliffs of Pacific Highway 101, rocky shores of Crescent City and wide sandy stretches at Shelter Cove, a popular spot for whale watching. The tour winds its way through the Olympic National Park, Forest of Washington and the Redwood National Park in Califor-

nia, taking in stops at San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles for a city fix.

■ **MORE INFO:** The tour takes place in summer and autumn, covering 1,700 miles over 15 days. The route sticks to tarmac roads but avoids most major highways. Eagle Rider has a range of bikes available for rental from Harleys to BMWs. All accommodation is in four-star motorcycle-friendly hotels.

■ **CONTACT:** www.eaglerider.com

WHERE? CENTRAL ASIA

■ **WHAT?** If you're eager to take on an epic adventure in 2013 through faraway lands, then Edelweiss Bike Travel has got the tour for you: a two-month journey from Moscow to Bangkok. Riders begin the tour in Russia's capital city and take the road east through Russia and then into the mysterious realm of Kazakhstan. The tour goes through China, the world's most populated country, before a final few days on the northern edge of Thailand and a chance to go charging down roads in the Chiang Mai Mountains before finishing off in buzzing Bangkok. Highlights include the leafy Kazak capital of Almaty at the foot of the snow-capped Tian Shan Mountain Range, a chance to see the pandas at the Giant Panda Research Base in Chengdu, roads that rarely see motorcycles, a variety of cultures, people and food.

■ **MORE INFO:** The tour takes a total of 63 days to complete and leaves on 11 August 2013. It runs over a whopping 8,700 miles, staying overnight in three-star hotels or basic bed and breakfasts. The tour is graded as 'tough' and runs on gravel and asphalt roads with long dirt road section. Riders must supply their own bike.

■ **CONTACT:** www.edelweissbike.com

WHERE? THE ALPS

■ **WHAT?** Global Motorcycle Tour's Grandes Alpes and Route Napoleon Tour is a classic alpine adventure combining spectacular scenery and challenging road riding. The French and Swiss Alps are a safe bet for magnificent twisties, deep valleys in the shadow of white jagged peaks, and wild flowering meadows lining endless winding roads. ABRs will travel the same route Napoleon took on his return from Elba in 1815 before arriving in the Alps. Highlights include the Jura Mountains and the medieval lakeside town of Annecy, the deep river canyon of the Verdon Gorge with its

startling turquoise water, Chamonix and Mont Blanc. The route also takes in the national parks of Pfalzer and Saar Hunsruck in Germany with their virtually traffic-free roads through thick forests. Riders will return to the UK via rural Luxembourg and Belgium.

■ **MORE INFO:** The 12-day tour begins and ends in Folkstone, Kent; riders take the Euro tunnel onto the continent before embarking on the 2,520-mile journey. This tour is most suited to experienced riders who are used to covering distances over mountainous terrain



Alpine twisties in France and Switzerland

on tarmac roads. Accommodation is in three-star hotels, and riders must supply their own bikes for the trip. The tour will take place 5-16 August 2013.

■ **CONTACT:** www.globalmotorcycle-tours.co.uk

WHERE? NORTH AMERICA

■ **WHAT?** This overland expedition with GlobeBusters though Alaska, Canada and the USA sets off from Anchorage. ABRs

will spend the first week exploring Alaska, taking on the remote and infamous Dalton Highway, a grueling 450-mile dirt road trip with unpredictable weather conditions, to reach the Arctic Circle, where those feeling brave enough can take a dip in the icy waters of the Arctic Ocean. The second and third weeks entail a journey through Canada and the Yukon, passing through Jasper National Park among rocky peaks and thick forest, where riders are virtually guaranteed to spot bears and moose en route. Weeks five and six are through cowboy territory



Ride Alaska, Canada and the USA with GlobeBusters

own bikes, but GlobeBusters is able to advise on transporting it.

■ **CONTACT:** www.globebusters.com

WHERE? PHILIPPINES

■ **WHAT?** The perfect winter retreat from well-known motorcycle touring company HC Travel, this trip circumnavigates the island of Mindoro, a journey that will take riders into the depths of the jungle and Mangyan territory. Riding on dirt paths through dense jungle and on rocky trails in the mountains, ABRs will discover the local communities, culture and wildlife. Besides biking, participants will also have the chance spend a night on a private desert island in native 'Nipa' huts, visiting Lake Taal and the surrounding volcanoes. And for real adrenaline junkies, there's also the chance to go scuba diving at Puerto Galera, one of the most productive marine eco-systems in the world, canoeing up the deep gorge that features in the movie *Apocalypse Now*, and shooting with the Philippines National Police at their shooting range.

■ **MORE INFO:** The tour covers around 800 miles of dirt roads and off-road trails in 15 days. The price includes rental of a Honda XLR 200 trail bike or similar, and accommodation in various hotels and quirky but comfortable residences. This tour is running over several dates between the



Retreat to the Philippines with HC Travel



Serene: the route back from Nordkapp

end of January and April 2013, with bookings available for groups in late autumn, too. Riders must be confident riding off-road, but the route can vary depending on experience

■ **CONTACT:** www.hctravel.com

WHERE? SCANDINAVIA

■ **WHAT?** In summer 2013, Overlanders is guiding a Scandinavian tour, taking in Norway, Sweden and Finland. The route is a loop starting and finishing at Oslo Rygge airport. ABRs will ride across Sweden to the Gulf of Bothnia, towards Lapland in Finland and into the Arctic Circle to beautiful Nordkapp before turning southwest along the coast of Norway and finally returning to Oslo. Scandinavia offers otherworldly vistas of unmatched natural beauty with dramatic coasts and misty mountains. Riders will get to see the UNESCO World Heritage site of Geiranger Fjord with its magnificent waterfalls, travel the serpentine Trollstigen mountain road, visit the Lofoten Islands and take a ride on the Atlantic Ocean Road – a magnificent ride through Eide and Averøy in Norway, on a route connecting small islands by several causeways, viaducts and eight bridges: an ABR's dream drive!

■ **MORE INFO:** This tour covers over 3,400 miles on paved roads only, making it relatively easy going, however riders must be comfortable travelling an average of 250 miles each day. Accommodation will be provided in log cabins and some three-star hotels over the 14-day trip. The tour departs 21 July, 2013, and Overlanders can organise bike and kit shipping one week prior to the departure date.

■ **CONTACT:** www.overlanders.ie

WHERE? NORTHEAST AFRICA

■ **WHAT?** Discover the northeast of Africa on Moto-Africa's Kenya to Cairo tour. Meeting in Nairobi, ABRs will head north past Mount Kenya to the equator and ride towards Isiolo and Marsabit,

before enjoying a glorious gravel section through dry and dusty surroundings to Moyale. From the Ethiopian border, the landscape changes to luscious greenery as riders climb into the highlands towards Addis Abeba. After a beautiful ride to Bahir Dar by Lake Tana, the tour heads towards Gonder and the Sudanese border before cruising the desert plains of Sudan, following the Blue Nile into Khartoum. Riders then continue north along the Nile,



Fancy an African Adventure in 2013?

detouring briefly to visit the pyramids at Meroë. In Wadi Halfa, participants will board the overnight ferry on Lake Nasser to arrive in Aswan, Egypt. After snaking alongside the Nile to Luxor and across Western Desert to the Red Sea, the tour finishes in Cairo.

■ **MORE INFO:** Riders will cover over 4,000 miles aboard their own bike on this 25-day tour; those wishing to take on a longer ride can join the beginning of the tour in Cape Town for an epic exploration of the whole of East Africa! The tour departs from Nairobi in mid-September 2013. Riders must have some off-road experience, a hardy attitude and be happy with varying accommodation from luxury hotels to very basic rooms.

■ **CONTACT:** www.moto-africa.com. ■