

HEAD OUT ON

THE HIGHWAY



Organising bespoke, two-wheeled expeditions on vintage motorbikes to some of the most spectacular places on the planet, Legendary Motorcycle Adventures does exactly what it says on the tin

WORDS: HUGH FRANCIS ANDERSON



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y tyres rumble over the boulders of a dry riverbed, the sun blisters the desolate landscape around me, and, in the distance, I can see the swaying boughs of a cedar forest beckoning me forward. The Atlas Mountains, Morocco, a 500cc Royal Enfield Bullet beneath me and miles between us and the nearest town.

In recent years, the concept of adventure motorcycling has grown exponentially. When Ewan McGregor and Charlie Boorman released their circumnavigation motorcycle documentary, *Long Way Round*,

back in 2004, a new opportunity dawned for the everyday motorcyclist to pack their things onto a bike and hit the open road, with nothing in mind



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except excitement and escapade. Cue the creation of Legendary Motorcycle Adventures (LMA).

After a life-affirming road trip into the Sahara Desert, Sam Pelly and Ed Talbot founded LMA to offer the thrill of motorcycle adventure to those who simply can't afford to drop everything and leave for months at a time. "This is more than just a travel experience," says Pelly. "LMA is a conversation around how to live a truer, more authentic existence." Having joined the company in northern Africa, I couldn't agree more.

We make the final preparations to our trusty Royal Enfield's at Talbot's farmhouse in Andalucía, Spain, before a gentle ferry takes us from Algeciras to Tangier Med, where we are hit by the might of the Moroccan landscape.

It's dusk and the light is fading, the glow of the sun casting the desert peaks around us in enchanting hues. I'm overwhelmed by both the beauty and the enormity of it all. Our spot for the night lies 100 miles south, and as darkness falls, ☾



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voyage into the wild

so too does the rain. The roads become slippery, the headlights of the little Fiat's struggle to penetrate the black, and we're all riding on the edge of our seats, adrenaline coursing through our veins. I know on this, our first day, that I'll leave the trip with life-changing memories and, with luck, lifelong friends, too.

Having ridden motorcycles for many years, I have often found myself explaining the thrill of riding to non-riders. Pelly and Talbot, though, have their own way of explaining the joy of motorcycling. "It's the freedom," says Ed, "the total involvement in the journey and the heightened sense of awareness which derives from relaxed vigilance." Pelly goes further: "There is an immediate connection to everything around you, the wind, the road, the landscape; I find it liberating and thrilling."

Waking early on the second morning in the heart of the Rif Mountains, we load our bags into the support truck, which comes in the form of Talbot's beautiful 94' Range Rover Classic, and head for Chefchaouen, Morocco's famous 'blue' city. For hours we wander around the souks and medina's, inhaling the richness of Moroccan culture; it's warmth, it's smell, the determination of market traders to haggle the price of just about everything. Although it was not on our



NEED TO KNOW

Prices at LMA start at **£1,800** based on a **five-day adventure**, which includes **motorcycles, fuel, food, tents** and a **support crew**. Prices excludes flights and motorcycle gear, legendarymotorcycleadventures.com

This article was supported by the Moroccan National Tourist Office, muchmorocco.com

(roughly) planned route, we wanted to explore this vibrant city, and the very nature of any adventure calls for the unexpected. With LMA, anything goes. You have complete sovereignty over the journey you're making. There may be a final destination, but the journey is yours for the making, something that must be wholeheartedly applauded.

We ride back into the hinterland, the smooth asphalt shimmering in the baking sun and our Bullets purring happily beneath us. We pass the Roman ruins of Volubilis and settle amid the olive groves surrounding Moulay Idriss for the night. Our swag tents are unrolled, a fire is lit, the guitar is passed around, and a bottle of whisky is shared as we laugh the night away.

Another early morning, another awe-inspiring vision from our campsite. I'm longing to get back on the road, as I know we're approaching the Atlas Mountains. We ride to Azrou, stop for coffee, get a puncture, fix the puncture, get another puncture, spend three hours on the side of the road as locals run to and fro to find new inner tubes, and finally continue on our way. True adventure comes from the unpredicted.

Soon the elevation increases, and the winding road cuts a deep furrow in the woodland that has suddenly surrounded us. Macaques climb in the trees, and as we continue to climb, the air becomes crisper and crisper. We pull over, the Range Rover has overheated during the climb, and, as it cools, I take the opportunity to rest my eyes beside the road. "It may not exactly be uncharted territory," I think to myself, "but it's unknown to us, and that's enough to make it a voyage into the wild."

Sometime later, we continue along the endless, lonesome dark road. Within half an hour, the scenery has changed completely. We've gone from the arid, sandy landscape of Meknes, through dense, monkey-filled cedar forests, and now, some 4,000 metres above sea level, we're in a world that looks more like Outer Mongolia than Morocco. ☺

GET THE KIT

Grab your leathers and go full throttle into the sunset



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