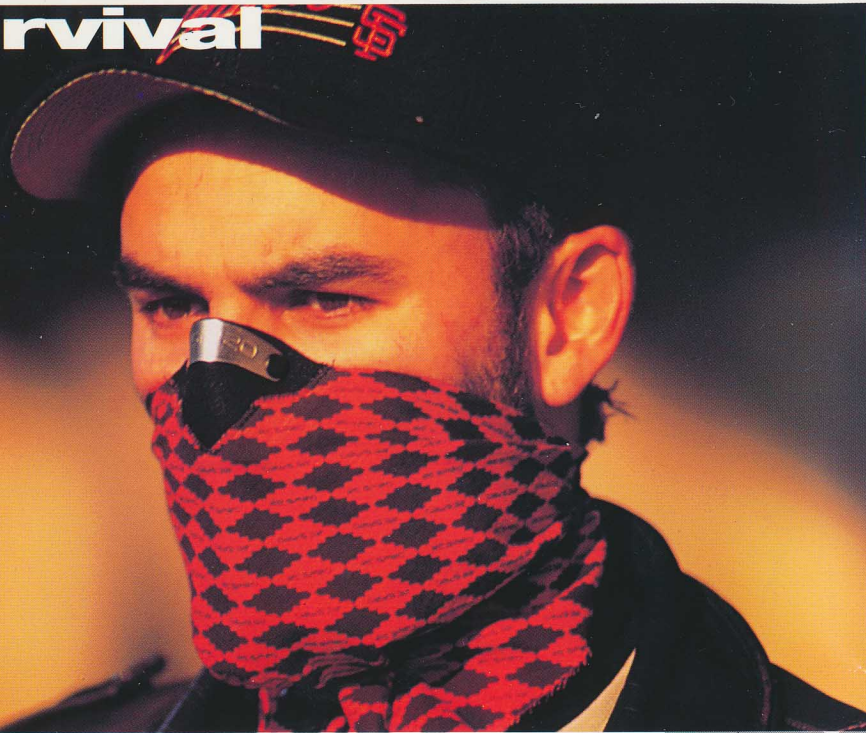


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March 1996 issue 8

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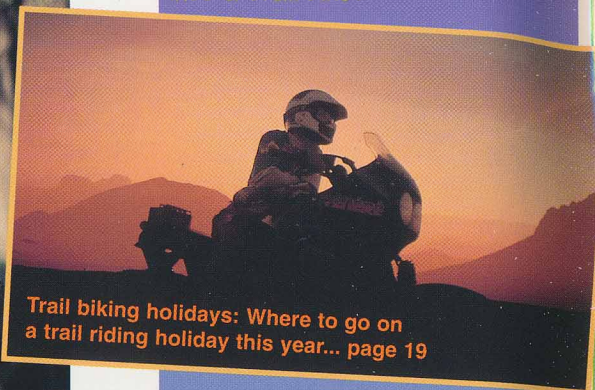
Where should you be heading this summer?



## PLUS MOTOCROSS TO TRAIL CONVERSION!

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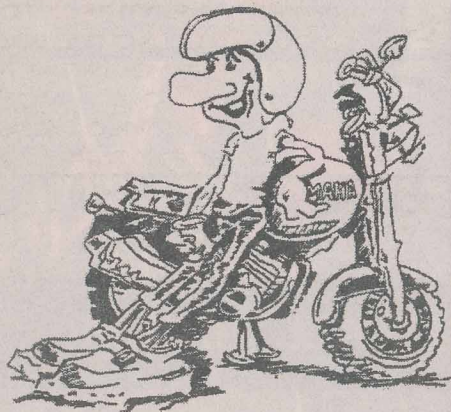
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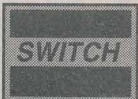
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**T**RADITIONALLY FEBRUARY IS THE TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN WE BRITS FORGET ALL ABOUT THE RAIN LASHING AGAINST OUR WINDOWS, AND THE CHILL OF THE COLD NORTH EASTERLY HOWLING ROUND OUR EARS, AND INSTEAD TURN OUR MINDS TO HOLIDAYS AND THOUGHTS OF SUMMER.

FOR MANY PEOPLE, TWO WEEKS SPENT LYING ON A SUN-SOAKED BEACH IS ENOUGH TO CHASE AWAY THE WINTER BLUES, THINKING OF NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN

WHERE THE NEXT DRINK IS COMING FROM. BUT OTHERS LIKE TO LIVE A LITTLE; THEY WANT TO TRAVEL, SEE THE SCENERY AND TASTE A LITTLE ADVENTURE.

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IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WHO GOES WHERE, TURN TO PAGE 18 AND READ OUR FEATURE ON TRAIL RIDING HOLIDAYS, AND DON'T FORGET IF YOU DO GO SOMEWHERE NICE THIS YEAR, SEND US A POSTCARD.

Si Melber

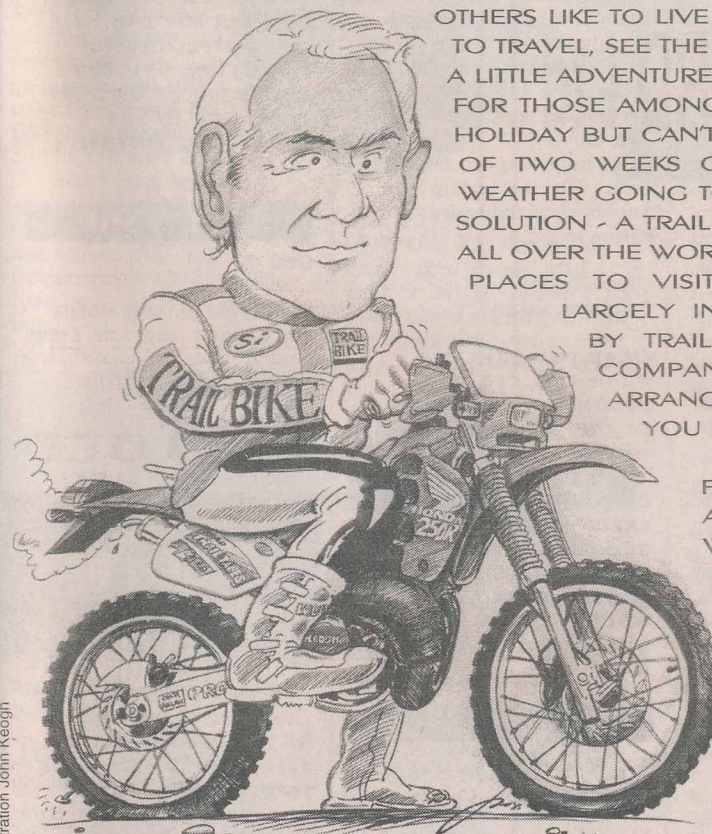


Illustration John Keogh

Edited and produced by Si Melber. Contributors: Paul Blezard, Dave Cornish, John Keogh, Marius Mckee, Kevin Raymond and Chris Scott. Editorial address: PO Box 1555, Salisbury, SP3 4PF. Distributed by SM Magazine Distribution Ltd, 0181 696 5200, Printed in England by Wiltshire (Bristol) Ltd. TrailBike Magazine is published on the first day of every month by Extreme Publishing Ltd, Registered in England and Wales, Company No. 3051747. All rights reserved. All material in TrailBike Magazine is copyright to Extreme Publishing Ltd and may not be reproduced in part or in full without the express permission of the publishers. ISSN 1359-0324

# Dear Trail Bike...

## Go Where?

Dear Sir

I was pleased to read the article 'The Beginners Guide to trail riding' in issue No 7. Whilst I realise that you could well be covering the answer to my question in future parts of this feature, I am concerned as to the legalities and availability of suitable rights of way. I am at present a trials rider looking to start trail riding, and I understand that there is no such classification as a 'Green Lane', however marked upon OS maps are rights of ways named 'Roads Used as Public Paths 'RUPP's'. I understand that such routes, although shown on the map, do not provide evidence of the existence of a right of way. I also understand that motor vehicles can only use these paths providing there is a legal vehicular access.

I would appreciate your advise as to how to obtain confirmation that any such RUPP on a map can be used as a Trail ride, as I wish to assess the availability of green lanes in the Yorkshire area.

P Howard Benton.  
Rawdon, Leeds

Dear TrailBike

I have recently purchased my first trail bike (an MTX200) after six years of 'race-reps'. You don't give it a particularly good write up, but as it's my first 'off road' bike it seems just fine for me.

My problem is that I simply don't know where to start when it comes to riding trails and off road and I would be grateful for any advice you can give. So far I have almost been arrested by the police and shot at by the army for using MOD land. What is my first move?

I hope you can help me as my bike is standing here, knobbles at the ready and raring to go.

Glynn Taylor  
Farnham, Surrey

*Okay you guys, we know this can be a problem if you're new to the game which is why next month's 'Beginners Guide' will be telling you in detail exactly where you can and cannot ride, as well as information on how to read a map and where to start looking for hidden rights of way!*

## Help

Dear TrailBike Magazine,

After Buying a 1983 Honda XL500R in June of this year, I am having great difficulty in finding people in the bike trade who know of any modifications and/or 'add-on' bits for my bike to improve performance. I am also looking for information as to whether any of the XL600L/LM parts will fit ie big tank/twin lights or disk brakes. Can you help?

Stephen Price  
Rhymney, Gwent  
*The front end off a 600*

*will go straight in (ie forks, wheel and brakes) but nothing else is interchangeable between the two without a great deal of modifying. Try Ken Wilkinson of Dirtbike Spares on 01629 540249 for further info.*

## Old Gold

Dear sir

Just a note to congratulate you on your magazine. I only bought it for the Rokon test in the January issue and was surprised how good it was - I was expecting the same stuff as the other magazines of the same format, but yours is much better. Keep testing and writing about unusual bikes.

M L  
Frome, Somerset

*Thanks, we will. And on that very subject if you've got a trail bike that you think should be featured in the magazine (either a classic trailie or something unusual) drop us a line to the usual address with a photo of your bike and we'll get in touch with you.*

## Legal Aid

Dear TrailBike,

I picked up your magazine recently and found it quite entertaining. I've decided to write to you for some advice. I am currently working in Scotland after studying in

Britain for three years. When I moved to Britain I left behind a 1990 Kawasaki KX125 motocrosser which I used for motocross and enduro for one season only. I never sold the bike 'cos I bought it new and looked after it well.

Now I am a few years older (24) I would like to take up enduros again, or perhaps just some trail-riding. Obviously my KX125 is not road legal and is set up for motocross. In fact there's far too much top-end power for



Road legal crossers? Talk to Pro Racing on 01327 301322

me. (and not enough low & mid range stuff).

What modifications/additions would I have to make to ensure that it's road legal, and more suitable for its intended use. Or, do you think I'd be silly to make the mods? If so what sort of machine should I be looking for? The main reason I don't want to sell the KX125 is because I know it's 100%, and I don't want to be buying someone else's trouble in a second-hand bike since I can't afford a new one.

D Kennedy  
Shandon, Edinburgh

Got an opinion?  
Then write to:  
TrailBike Magazine  
PO Box 1555  
Salisbury  
SP3 4FF



*Our advice is to stick with the KX since you know it's good, and with a bit of modifying you can do enduros on it. Meantime, checkout our feature called Cross Dressing this month for the people to contact. Timely or what?*

## Too Rude

Dear Sir

A few comments on the February issue of TBM. I know that it is almost de rigueur these days to use foul language in motorcycling magazines but did Tom Isitt really have to be quite so coarse when referring to the effects of the saddle on his anatomy in the XR400R road test.

Regarding the TrailBike Guide, do you want comments from readers or don't you? Whichever it is you could make it clear without resorting to the bit of gratuitous unpleasantness that you put in each month at the end of the introduction.

It is clear that Mr Coward (Cowards Way) is a newcomer to the ranks of off road sport and as such perhaps could be excused for not knowing that there is a voluntary restraint

on the use of the Ridgeway at weekends and after bad weather, but you must know and a comment by you to that effect would at least have shown that you were taking a responsible attitude in this very delicate situation.

Finally I could not agree more with John Richards comments on the opportunities (or lack of them) for 'mucking about on bikes' The whole Green Lane riding activity is one which is fraught with problems (ask the TRF) and if those people who just want to have a good time going as fast as they can, throwing wheelies, getting stuck in deep mud and all the other things which rightly upset the walkers and horse-riders, could go off to a bit of waste ground somewhere and be happy loonies together without upsetting anyone it would be a very good thing for all concerned. Perhaps TBM might get something going.

Keep up the good work and with a bit more effort you might have a good magazine, it certainly fills a very empty slot.

RCombley  
Headington, Oxford

# C R O S S

It's dirty work but  
someone has to do it.  
Can a motocrosser  
make it as a trail bike?  
Dave Cornish went to  
find out

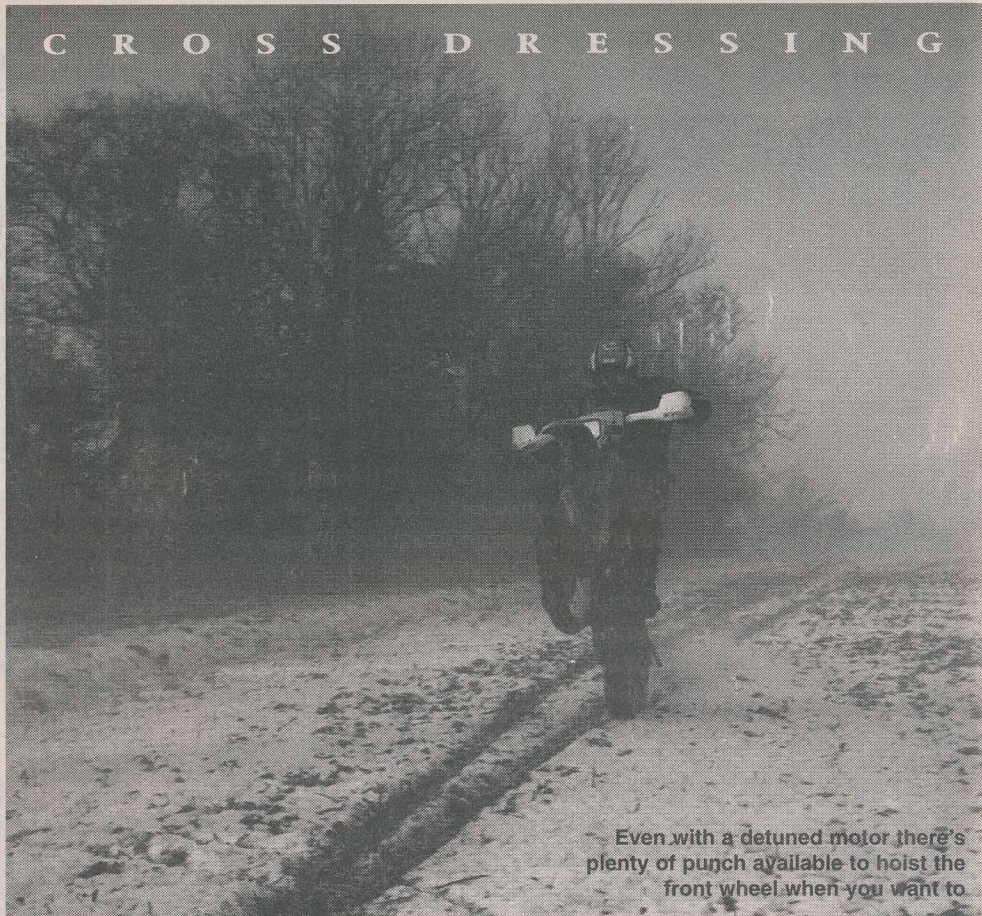


Converting motocrossers for enduro and road use isn't a new idea, but in the past the results haven't always been satisfactory. So when we heard about Pro Racing's converted CR250 which was claimed to be ideal for enduro work or even green lane use we had to give it a try. Dave Cornish takes up the story

**M**otocross bikes are designed for a specific purpose: to win motocross races. Their seats are hard, their suspension taut, and the engine is tuned for maximum power. Close ratio gearboxes are designed to get you out of the starting gate and into the first corner.....first. Noise isn't a problem, nor is limited fuel capacity as races are short and confined to purpose built tracks. But while most of this is irrelevant for the average trail rider there's no denying that MX bikes are bloody good off road. What then if a way could be found of utilising all that is good about a motocrosser (light weight, top-notch suspension etc) and harnessing it in a form that has some relevance to the average enduroist or trail rider? Wouldn't that make for a stunning machine? Well that's exactly what Pro Racing of Daventry have done. With a used motocrosser as their starting point, Pro Racing have added to it, modified it and finally marketed it as an alternative to a new or used enduro bike offering a machine that is both quick and capable off road but in a rider friendly package designed with maximum versatility in mind. But would it work?

# D R E S S I N G

## C R O S S D R E S S I N G



Even with a detuned motor there's plenty of punch available to hoist the front wheel when you want to

Pro Racing whose usual business involves tuning engines and suspension mainly for competition use, have been busy over the last 18 months building up a comprehensive conversion kit to enable a serious rider to make his 'crosser street legal. A visit to their stand at this year's Dirt Bike Show revealed a Honda CR250 with a full conversion to enduro spec - at a very affordable price. Not only did the bike have all the gear to be street legal, but more importantly the motor had been modified to produce a more usable power output, which combined with a package of suspension modifications helps transform a firebreathing race bike into an altogether

er more docile machine suitable for enduro or even greenlane use.

Rob and Nick the proprietors of Pro Racing invited us along to try out the converted bike and to see for ourselves if an ex-motocross machine can really be mild enough to trail ride on without either oiling the plug or spitting off it's rider.

So while the rest of Britain was tucked up in bed hibernating from the coldest spell since the last ice age, I was crawling along the A14 in freezing fog en route to sampling some of Northamptonshire's many byways aboard the Pro Racing machine. I must admit the thought of trying to hustle a 50+hp beast along frozen

rutted lanes was almost enough to make me turn around and head back home. But being a ten-pack hard Northerner and with the honour of TBM at stake I pushed on arriving at their Daventry premises just in time for tea and biccies.

Rob was already kitted up and ready to go for the day and so was my bike. Looking even more purposeful than the first time I'd clapped eyes on it, the 1992 Honda CR250 could have been passed off as an almost new model rather than a four year old machine. White, blue and yellow bodywork gave it an 'as new' appearance and considering the conversion had been done more than a year ago the whole thing looked remarkably well maintained.

The motor on this particular CR had been treated to an 'enduro torque' porting job with altered power-valve timing for a smoother delivery, and in conjunction with a hand-fabricated expansion chamber, alloy enduro silencer and a carb rejetting, put out approximately 42hp, compared to a stock CR's claimed peak of 53hp. Okay I know what you're thinking; a reduction of 11hp sounds like a large drop in power, but in this case it really is an example of 'it ain't what you got it's the way that you use it'. For 95% of riding conditions it is claimed the modified machine will not only be as quick than the stocker's rev hungry motor, but far easier to ride and arguably much more reliable thanks to less stress on the bottom end and transmission.

Other mods to the powerplant included HRC factory 3rd, 4th, and 5th gears (expensive but available) to give a wider ratio enduro type transmission, and light-weight magnesium alloy QD engine side covers which started life on Jeff Stanton's works supercrosser (expensive and unavailable). To provide juice for the enduro lighting, a set of 12 volt, 150 watt

lighting coils fit snugly inside the standard generator rotor, flywheel weights can also be added to further smooth out the powerband but on our bike (Nick's personal machine) these weren't deemed necessary.

As you would expect, the Pro Racing boys have modified the standard 45mm Showa forks as well as re-valving the stock rear suspension to give a smoother, more supple ride more suited to enduros and trail riding. Top quality switchgear and a wiring loom which would put many a production item to shame are then fitted, and a neat alloy sidestand (MX bikes don't have 'em as standard) is fabricated and attached. To protect the expansion chamber and engine cases, trick looking carbon/kevlar guards are fitted along with a beefy alloy waterpump shield. The aftermarket plastics give the bike a new lease of life and include a US-made 13 litre fuel

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# C R O S S D R E S S I N G

tank (7.5 litre standard), giving the CR a useful range of around 85 miles. The stock rear mudguard is left in place and a simple bolt on extension fitted with a street legal stop/tail lamp unit, along with Rally Brush Guards, Renthal bars, a hydraulic brake lamp switch, Technosel seat and finally an enduro main/dip headlamp unit.

Swinging a leg over the bike for the first time came as a bit of a shock to my 5'8" frame - the bike was set up to suit Nick who turns out to be 6'6" tall. Thankfully the original seat is both lower and softer, vital for us normal mortals, and as these bikes are all custom built, the final spec is of course down to the owner so everything can be altered to suit the individual and his or her wallet (*or purse! - ed*).

Starting the CR wasn't as traumatic as expected, flick on the carb mounted choke, gas on and a few stabs on the alloy kick-starter soon has the motor fired up. Care must be taken to ensure the bike is warmed up properly before gunning the motor, as with no thermostat fitted to the cooling system it's all too easy to nip up that expensive 66 mm piston with a cold seizure. After a few minutes warming to get the bikes nice and toasty, off we went in search of some dirty fun.

With Rob leading on a Suzuki RMX enduro bike for comparison I gingerly eased the CR out onto the ice-covered main road. Watching Rob getting it completely sideways doing a Torvill & Dean impression didn't exactly fill me with confidence (I don't usually need much of an excuse to bin it), but we pressed on through the freezing fog for another six miles of tarmac, the modified CR250 cruising along at a reasonable pace, feeling much nicer to ride than most of the two stroke competition bikes I've owned. The CR would pull

from low down and carburate precisely at all revs. I'm not saying that riding it on the road is without it's problems, the seat on our example was more of an instrument of torture than somewhere to rest your backside (no doubt designed to encourage a lazy rider to keep on the pegs off road), and the vibrations coming through the footrests could only be matched by something from pages 5 and 6 in the Ann Summers catalogue. But as serious dirt bike riders believe tarmac is only a necessary evil to link together the muddy bits, this unsuitability for long hauls along the blacktop is probably a tad irrelevant anyhow. Soon we arrived at the first byway which passes alongside Plimpton wood and it was time to see if the bike would live up to expectations.

This section of green lane is probably a reasonably easy trek in the summer months, but in the depths of winter the criss cross pattern of frozen ruts looked potentially lethal. Third gear, stood up on the pegs and working the throttle in a vain attempt to find some grip seemed like the best way of making progress. The CR's superb suspension was working overtime beneath me, flattening out the solid ruts, soaking up the undulations yet never showing any signs of getting out of shape. And this factor combined with the low to mid range grunt of the retuned motor meant progress was swift straight from the off - at least it was until I misjudged a kink in the track, got totally cross rutted and launched myself and the bike into a nearby ditch. Oh well... With no damage done, the bike fired up first kick and with first gear selected pulled us both out of the ditch and back onto the trail. Despite my excursion into the scenery and the truly appalling condi-

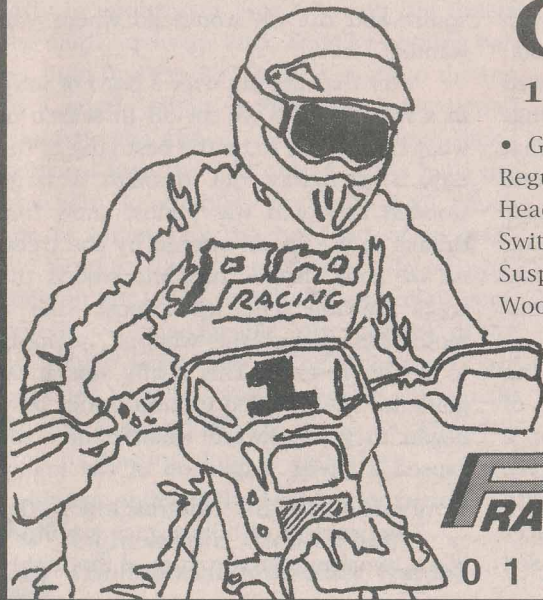


Converted crosser makes a great enduro bike and even works well out on the trail

## THE ULTIMATE ENDURO BIKE

# CR TO XC

125 - 250 - 500

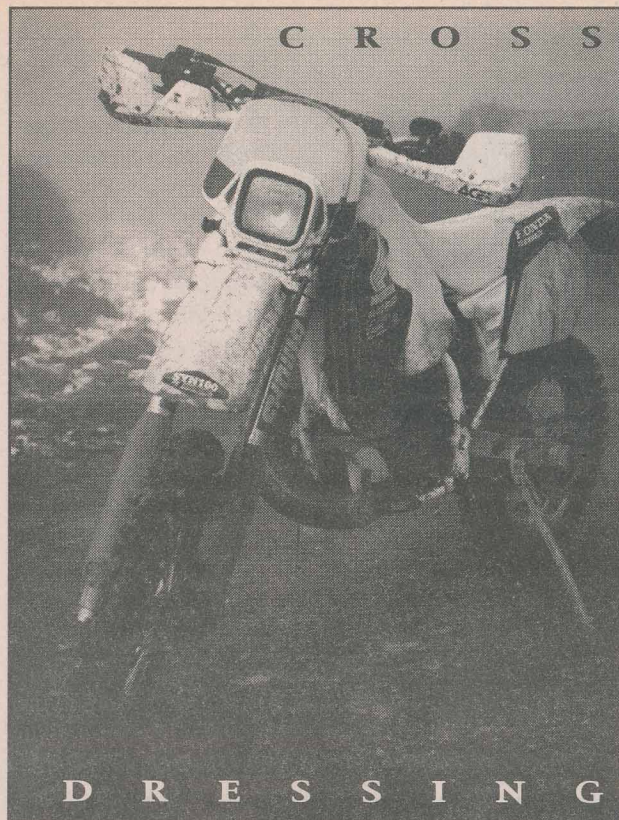


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**PRO RACING**

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by en route to the next muddy challenge - Banbury lane. Five minutes later the CR was up to the bottom of its tank in a whole series of huge ruts, the icy water causing great clouds of steam to rise off the motor as I struggled to keep up the momentum. Although first gear is a little tall for this sort of heavy going, the CR's enormous torque never lets it down, and as long as traction is available the bike can power it's way out of anything, (though of course fitting the optional flywheel weights give the motor even more low end torque).

Blatting along through these huge ruts, once again the compliant suspension took everything in it's stride, and allowed me to concentrate on the trail rather than what the bike was doing; and with such a light front end compared to a trail

tions through which we were riding, I was beginning to warm to the bike and began to enjoy myself tackling the sort of obstacles that I would never attempt aboard most trail bikes. One of the great things about trail riding in winter is the fact that you probably aren't going to meet anyone else out for a walk and on these particular byways a restriction is imposed on four wheel drive vehicles, so except for the odd sheep you can enjoy the scenery on your own and at your own pace.

Back on the road again and riding through the quaintly named village of Morton Pinkney we slowed down for a couple of horses, their riders braving the icy conditions like we were. The noise emanating from the CR's enduro silencer didn't even raise an eyebrow as we passed

bike it was mostly just a case of point and squirt and the CR would go where you wanted.

After thawing out over a bowl of soup in a friendly pub we set off in search of what turned out to be the best lane of the day. This byway ran through a large wooded area and was almost snow free thanks to the shade offered by the trees. As we rode deeper into the woods the track became cut up almost like a motocross course - the 'whoops' seeming to go on forever. This really was ideal going for the modded CR and things only began to get awkward when pilot error caused a closer inspection of the loamy Northants soil for both machine and rider.

The problem with most race machines is the temperamental nature of the highly

strung powerplant and a reluctance to run well at low rpm, so I was really impressed to find this bike easy to ride off the pipe at slower speeds. And of course you always have the option of really letting rip and using some of that awesome mid range punch. The motor will also rev out easily, but for most riders short shifting in the lower gears is the hot ticket for fast progress.

With the light fading fast we hurried back to Pro Racing's HQ down some deserted back roads, and winding open the throttle out of corners I had to work hard to keep the front end down. Even in third and fourth gear such is the torque from the gutsy CR's motor that the front wheel climbs skywards at an alarming rate if you choose to abuse the throttle.

### Conclusion

Will a bike like this be suited to your needs? Well it all depends on the type of riding you do, if you have to ride miles and miles on the road to reach your nearest lanes then forget it, and if the tracks you ride are fairly easy then this bike's abilities are wasted, so look elsewhere. However if you compete regularly in enduros or aren't having fun unless the mud's up to the tank, and like nothing better than finding the toughest route to the top of a gnarly climb, a Pro Racing conversion could be the answer to your dreams. Nick's personal bike has had over a year's hard use now with no reliability problems at all, which speaks volumes for the durability of the original product. Pro Racing have achieved what they set out to do, to build a supremely competent yet manageable dirt blaster at an affordable price, and if their customers are anything to go by, more and more of them are finding them equally at home on a muddy trail, as blasting along in an enduro.

- +** Suspension, Power delivery, Light weight, Custom built
- Limited road suitability, Not for beginners

### THIS ONE

Nicks personal bike started life as a 1992 CR250 which he sourced through a customer of theirs. The test bike was a fully loaded version with almost everything they offer. Most parts are pretty reasonable in terms of cost and you can have as little or as much work done to your bike depending on your needs and budget. Expensive items such as the HRC gear clusters can bump up the price, but a cheaper Pro Racing designed gearbox is on its way. In this form the Bike is worth about £2,000, but machines can start from as little as £1000 fully converted depending on your requirements and the age of the base model. Remember all these bikes are fully road legal, MOT'd and silenced to an acceptable 88db.

### PRO RACING

Rob came up with the idea of converting old 'crossers' whilst thumbing through the classified ads. Basically, in the fashion-conscious world of motocross, a two year old bike is about as hip as the crimplene beige safari suit the editor wears, and can be snatched up for a little over two grand. (Well I think it looks good - ed!)

Go back another two years and 800 quid will secure you a good, used but still basically sound example. Spend (up to) £500 converting and rebuilding it and voila, one trick road legal enduro/trail bike at a fraction of the cost of a new machine.

Pro Racing will convert almost any modern motocrosser but admit to a preference for post 89 CRs. The reasons for this are simply the ease with which Hondas can be modified, along with the fact that the CR has changed very little since 1990 and their popularity among motocrossers means there's simply more of them about.

Although Pro Racing intended the conversions to be used primarily for enduro use, more and more customers are finding them ideal for green laning and having their bikes built to suit. If you want one, find yourself a suitable donor bike and then contact Rob or Nick at Pro Racing on 01327 301322.



**You've asked for it, and here it is: the TrailBike Magazine guide to all the events you need to know about this year, (or at least the ones we know of so far).... Grab your diary, cancel your social engagements and make a date for a whole year of trail bike sporting action.**

## Feb

11 Trail Bike Enduro Club fun enduro. Classes for all types of trail bikes including pre-83 aircooled twinshocks, right up to modern day kit. Separate class for all enduro machines. *Barnhill Farm, Whaddon, Nr Milton Keynes. Contact: Dawn King 01933 626009.*

11 Brass Monkeys Enduro. Season opening enduro in Somerset with a reputation for being tough but enjoyable. *Contact / Musgrove 01823 666252.*

11 Le Touquet Beach Race. Biggest and best beach bash in Europe - enter it on any trail, enduro or MX bike. Hundreds of bikes make this a brilliant spectacle to watch. *Le Touquet, Nr Boulougne, France.*

18 White Peak Trial. Long distance trial (ie for trail bikes) going through some of Derbyshire's most picturesque scenery. Great fun event. *Contact Richard Dawe, ACTC, 0181 332 7035.*

24 'Gilles Lalay Classic' enduro. Toughest enduro in the world with a host of British and European stars like Stephane Peterhansel. Gruelling but fun to watch. *Peyrat-le-Chateau, France.*

24-9/3 Oasis Enduro. North African desert rally

organised by Dakar and MX veteran Heinz Kinigadner (and KTM Austria). Only open to KTMs. *More info from KTM (Aus) on 00 43 77 42 60 00.*

## March

14-17 Elba Enduro Adventure Rallye. Rallye-cum-enduro training on the beautiful island of Elba organised by KTM Austria. Only open to KTMs. *More info from KTM (Aus) on 00 43 77 42 60 00.*

17 Trail Bike Enduro Club fun enduro. Classes for all types of trail bikes including pre-83 aircooled twinshocks, right up to modern day kit. Separate class for all enduro machines. *Foxborough, Suffolk. Contact: Dawn King 01933 626009.*

22-24 Raid Normandie. Three days of trail riding in picturesque northern France. Cost £220 including bed, breakfast and evening meals (but not ferry). *Details from Chris Evans at Sport Adventure, tel: 00 331 42 09 97 73 and fax: 00 331 46 07 30 54.*

## April

6 Lands End Trial. Long distance trial (for trail bikes) that's been going for decades. Nighttime off road sections and lots of road mileage make this a nice challenge. *Contact Richard Dawe, ACTC, 0181 332 7035.*

7 Cambrian Rally. Fun off road event in Wales for trail bikes and four stroke enduro machines (with separate classes for each). All sizes of machines catered for in this special semi-competitive event run along the lines of a car rally. *Contact Bob Jefferies on 01633 874610 for more info.*

18-28 Optic 2000 Rallye-Raid Tunisia. Race across the Tunisian Desert and a corresponding raid (non-competitive event). Tough, challenging but fulfilling. Taste the desert - literally. *Details from NPO on 00 331 46 91 68 00.*

## May

19 BMF Rally. Huge outdoor gathering of bikes and associated paraphernalia. Lots to see, loads of stands and retailers. *East of England Showground, Peterborough, Cambs.*

## June

6-9 Alpine Tour Enduro. Enduro event based in the Austrian Alps organised by KTM Austria. Competitive but fun. Only open to KTMs. *More info from KTM (Aus) on 00 43 77 42 60 00.*

20-21 Welsh Two Day Enduro. As much a good hard trail ride as a tough enduro these days. Lots of sidecars, plenty of fun (and water) in the Welsh countryside, but note it takes place on Thur/Fri. *The Lakeside, Llandindrod Wells. Details from Zembrzusi Motorcycles on 01597 851811.*

## July

14 Stella Alpina Rally. Huge (semi-official) gathering of all types of trail bikes (but mainly big trailies) in the Alps for a week of unplanned off roading now in its 31st year. Usually about 1000 bikes, free to enter, just turn up and camp. *Bardonecchia, Italy.*

## August

Acerbis Adventure Rallye. International rally open to all types of trailie/enduro bikes. Last

year took place in Nevada USA this year it may be Peru. More details when they become available.

Raid Normandie. Three days of trail riding in picturesque northern France. Exact dates not yet available, cost £220 including bed, breakfast and evening meals (but not ferry). *Details from Chris Evans at Sport Adventure, tel: 00 331 42 09 97 73 and fax: 00 331 46 07 30 54.*

5-10 Viking Tour. Yet another KTM (Austria) organised Rallye/enduro this time in Sweden and Denmark. Only open to KTMs. *More info from KTM (Aus) on 00 43 77 42 60 00.*

12-17 International Six Day Enduro. The ISDE which this year takes place in Finland is a battle between top level enduro riders competing for both themselves and their country. Good relaxed atmosphere lets you get in among the riders. Worth seeing. *Haemeenlinna, Finland.*

## September

1-8 Transdanubia. Competitive (but not too tough) fun rally which starts in Munich in Germany and progresses through Austria and Czechoslovakia to Hungary. Lots of back up and suitable for any type of prepared big trailie (especially BMW GSs) or enduro bikes. Cost: . *Details on 00 49 83 24 28 76.*

Rally of Discovery. Treasure hunt type rally aimed at big trailies which takes place in Ireland. Lasts a week, and includes mainly road mileage but with as much off roading as you want to try! Only semi competitive and not too tough to compete in, plus chance to revel in glorious Irish scenery and hospitality. Cost approx £275 for the week including bed, breakfast and evening meals. *County Cork, Ireland. Details from Phil Gunn on 00 353 21 88 94 62.*

29 Hafren Rally. Like the Cambrian, a semi-competitive rally aimed at trail bikes of all shapes and sizes (as well as four stroke enduro machines), through the charming Hafren Forest in Wales. Not too tough and great fun. *Details from John Edmonds 01597 840293.*



**The Transdanubia Rally kicks off in September this year. Why not have a go on your trail bike?**

29 Ilkley Trial. Long distance trial (for trail bikes) over Ilkley Moor (bar t'at) in Yorkshire. Good fun. *Contact Richard Dawe, ACTC, 0181 332 7035.*

### October

4-6 Bracken Rally. Treasure hunt type rally in Wales organised by ex-Dakar rider Jon Watson-Miller. Far more sociable than competitive, the rallyists have to devise their own route to a number of checkpoints. Costs approximately £115 including accommodation and meals but entry by invitation only so you need to ring *John on 0171 231 9438* and talk to him nicely.

6 Surrey Police three stage trial. Sort of a trial, trail and enduro event all rolled into one. Open to members of the public, reasonably competitive but not too tough. *Contact Dick Coles on 01883 743181.*

12-13 Weston Beach Race. Fast, furious and funny this traditional bash takes place on the dunes at Weston-Super-Mare. Open to anyone with any type of off roader though MX and enduro bikes are most common. Lots of sweaty fun with plenty of crowd support. *Weston-Super-Mare, Avon/Somerset.*

20 Exmoor Clouds Trial. Long distance trial (for trail bikes) on beautiful Exmoor. *Contact Richard Dawe, ACTC, 0181 332 7035.*



KTM's enduro tours are more like rallies, and open to anyone with a KTM

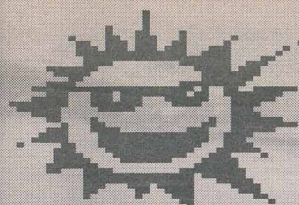
### November

7-17 NEC show. The annual bike show at which the manufacturers parade all next year's models. Lots of other interesting supporting stands. Cost approx £10. *National Exhibition Centre, Nr Birmingham Midlands.*

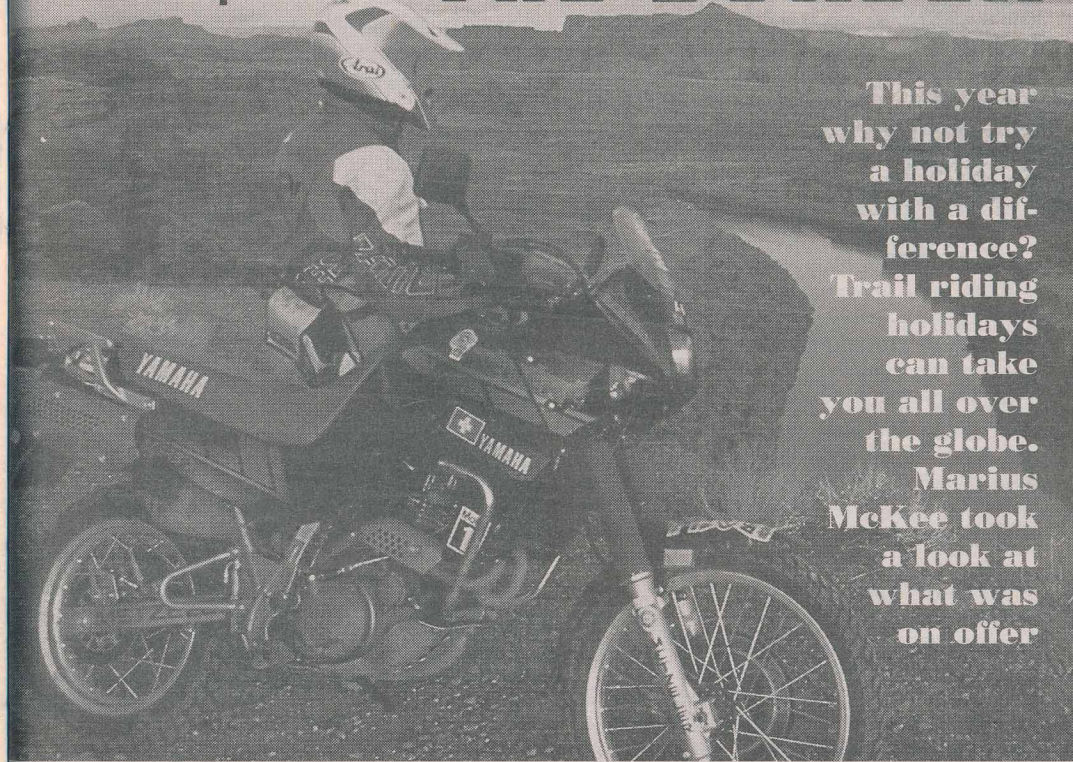
21-24 Dirt Bike Show. Annual bikefest of all competitive off road machines, and occasional trail bikes. Plenty of enduro bikes and lots of stalls flogging cheap riding gear. *Donington Park Circuit, Donington, Midlands. Tel 01656 720023.*

### December

30 Granada-Dakar. Traditional season ending (and beginning) blast through North and West Africa. Not without reason is this described as the toughest race in the world - but it's not impossible, and many privateers have achieved the dream of standing on the beach at Dakar. Open to fully prepped trail/enduro bikes. *Details from TSO on 00 331 41 33 14 50.*



# BREAK FOR THE BORDER



**This year why not try a holiday with a difference? Trail riding holidays can take you all over the globe. Marius McKee took a look at what was on offer**

This is the TrailBike guide to biking holidays around the globe this year. Europe is great in summer, desert trips are possible further afield all winter. You can climb mountains in Peru, cross desert and jungle in Australia and Africa, or ride through canyons in Mexico, and see glaciers in Alaska and Iceland? Get fit, get saving, and renew your passport right now.....

#### Britain

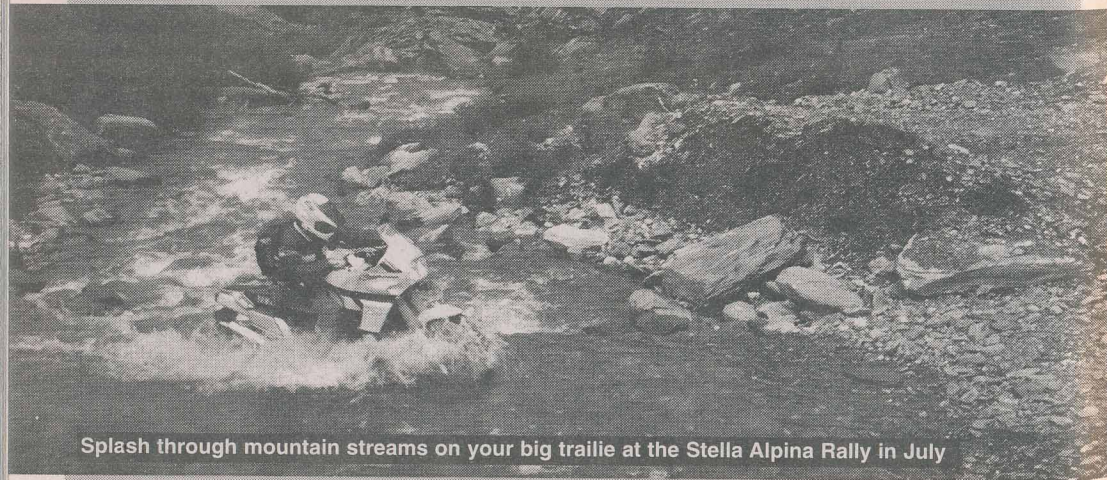
Well, Scotland to be precise. You can ride all the way there without using a ferry, take your bike by train to Aberdeen, or even hire a bike once you get there. Bike Tours Scotland run residential training courses, week-end breaks, and twenty other outdoor sports are available through them at competitive rates. You can just hire a trail bike for £40 per day or go for the 14

day all inclusive round Scotland trip for £600 including 250/350/650cc bike hire. Contact Martin Kirk, phone and Fax; 01651 821443.

#### Europe

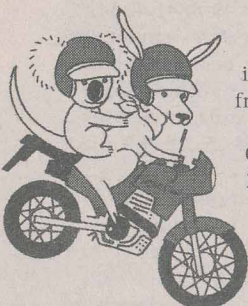
Still close to home, easy to get your own bike there by ferry, some companies will even arrange that for you. Go to the Alpine region for pine forests, stunning scenery and steep sided trailing. Go south for hills, dust, sun and of course the beaches.

In France, CRTT offer a range of rides (raids they call them) from three to eleven days. Some go to the beach, some go to the mountains of the Pyrenees, some trail through the muddy woods of northern France and they also organise trips in Spain and Portugal. You can hire bikes, chose your level of accommodation and pay accord-



Splash through mountain streams on your big trailie at the Stella Alpina Rally in July

# BREAK FOR THE BORDER



ingly. Last years prices were from £150 to £800 depending on the trip. Contact CRTT in Paris on 00 331 43 21 45 45, fax 00 331 40 47 64 28.

For more luxurious accommodation but some tough mountain riding in the French Alps contact Charles Fleming of

Moto Tout Terrain. Dates and routes are flexible as he makes up groups of five to ten people and can cater for small groups who wish to ride together. He can also cater for non-riding partners but they will need their own transport for sightseeing. Some high altitude trailing too. Prices for 1996 will depend on bookings so to get information call 00 33 53 50 12 39, or fax 00 33 53 50 89 02.

Moto-Tours of Hertfordshire take the ferry to northern 'hidden' Spain in April and September. Spain has all types of terrain from canyons to alpine forests. For larger bikes and a chance to go white water rafting take the autumn trip to the Pyrenees. Prices cost around £440 include the Portsmouth to Bilbao ferry, B&B accommodation, insurance, guide, back-up trailer and more. Contact George Cherry on 01920 871988.

How do you fancy riding the length and breadth of Portugal over 18 days this summer? Take your own bike and meet the others in Portsmouth and travel by ferry to Bilbao, Spain and ride all the way to the Algarve. The trip is easy and should suit first timers, 1400 miles, 25% off road. Some dust tracks, some mountain slopes, some beach and plenty of sun, sea and sand on the way.



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£850 includes ferry, food, accomodation, but not fuel, oil, insurance or lunches and goodies. Call Neil at Dust Trails on 01985 841184 for more details.

You want to go trailing, your partner wants to lie on a beach. Cyprus is the answer. Spend a week in the Troodos mountains exploring miles of untouched forest and breathtaking scenery, and a week in Arams Park on the beach, or any combination of one and two week breaks. Biking all year round, groups catered for and reasonable bike hire by the day. Specialist local knowledge of the best rides too. Contact Jerry Ashcroft, (Cyprus) 00 357 2 922208, Fax: 00 357 2 923455.

In Germany, BMW organise courses for all types of riders from beginners to pro level at their 'Enduro Park' at Heckligen, south Germany. They have a team of cross country and long distance off-road specialists to teach you all the tricks of the trade. You can ride one of their bikes at a price or bring your own as long as it is 'up to date' (I quote!). They have courses throughout the year but you need to organise your own travel and accommodation. Contact Paul Andrews, BMW (GB) 01344 480185, fax 01344 480316 for more details.

Wustenfahrer of Germany organise one week circular trips through the Alps over the summer months, and usually at least half the distance is off road. The most stunning mountain scenery in Europe and some fellow riders to compare stories. From around £500 to £750 depending on the trip and accommodation type. The price usually includes B&B, or camping, instruction and route guides. Call them in Seehausen Am Staffelsee,

Germany on 0049 8841 4224 phone and Fax.

Italy, the pasta, the pizza, the ancestral home of the exotic car and designer bikes, the bottom pinchers paradise, the 47 different governments since last Thursday..... Forget all of that and keep your eyes on the road. All Italian drivers think they are God's gift to women and a Formula 1 racer to boot. Luckily Moto-Tours of Ware run a September trip taking in the coolness of the Alps through Tuscany to the seven hills of Rome. The easy option is to take your bike via motorail and enjoy a relaxing journey watching the scenery go by. Prices include bike transport from about £600, £370 extra for your pillion passenger. Contact George Cherry on 01920 871988.

Iceland, land of Bjork, geysers and unpronounceable names. You can trail across volcanoes, under



waterfalls, visit ice caves, sit in hot springs and gaze up at snow capped peaks all around you. Mileage over 16 days is about 1000, 300 on tracks and 450 on gravel roads. Price includes evening meals and breakfast, flights to Rejkjavik, your bike shipped to Iceland (and back) and other transport where necessary. Only one trip, 20 July - 4 August for £1650. Contact: Neil at Dust Trails, 01985 841184.

## Africa

You can trail in North Africa and South Africa now, across the rock and sand of the Sahara, or the savanna of the south. Most Saharan operations demand a reasonable level of skill, a good, recent bike and half decent physical fitness.

Five to six weeks (we can't be too accurate here!) across the Sahara from Tunisia to Lake Chad and back. Organised by German firm Wustenfahrer who have been in the business for

ten years, this is a true endurance test of you and your bike. They also do two and three week tours of Tunisia, avoiding the hot summer months. It helps if you can read German when you get the brochure. Contact Thomas Trossmann phone and Fax 00 49 8841 4224.

Morocco, Marrakech, the Atlas mountains, Tuaregs riding camels in the desert. Your own mini Dakar for 16 or 23 days with an experienced group running just two or three trips a year. 1600 or 2200 miles, and 25-30% off road. Your own bike shipped to Gibraltar, your flights, ferry crossings, support transport, hotel and camping costs plus breakfast and evening meals. All in packages from £1250. Contact Neil at Dust Trails. Warminster 01985 841184.

South Africa saw a tourist explosion in 1995, this year Superbike Safari's are offering great deals for riders and pillions from ten to 17 days. Not much trailing but plenty of dirt roads and savanna, plus the wildlife. Prices from £1590 include return air fares, motorcycle hire, machine insurance and overnight accommodation. Year round good weather, great scenery and little other traffic in the bush ensure traditional open road biking. Bring your camera! Contact David Dixon 0181 395 6060, fax 0181 770 3832.

From Cape Town in South Africa, 'Le Cap' will organise a tailor made tour to your requirements. Hire a bike by the day or week or month, whatever. Take the spectacular coast road or go inland and join a 4WD safari park tour accompanied by armed guards just in case the lions attack. No kidding, I've been on safari and you do get that close. A ten day tour over 1600 miles will cost about £1150 all in, with passengers about half price extra. Call David Grist on 01256 770775, fax 01256 771773 for details.

## The Americas

The USA has hundreds of tours for every conceivable duration and level, but we've featured some of the more out of the way ones.

Alaska....the last frontier..... unspoilt views..... glaciers..... mountains..... the Yukon..... grizzly bears..... gold mines.... did I just say grizzly bears?

The Great Canadian Motor Corporation organise small groups on a 14 day wildernss trip of



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# BREAK FOR THE BORDER

2500 miles, 300 of which are off road like you've never seen before for £2200. Your passenger/grizzly scarer sits on the back seat for £1,300. That includes the usual stuff and the biggest breakfasts ever. Call Mr Grist at H-C Travel, 01256 770775, fax 01256 771773.

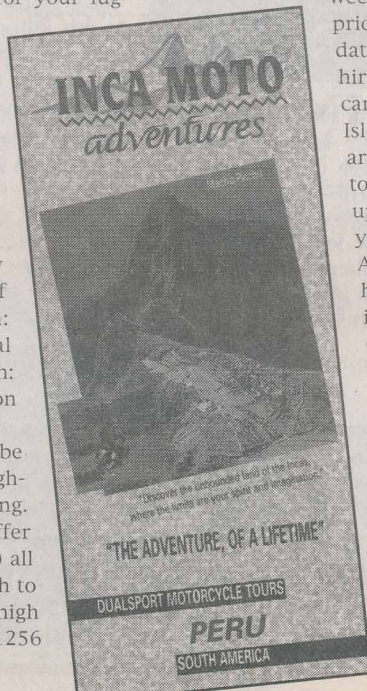
Adios, mis Amigos, you gringos take a hike down to Mexico where Mexico Motorcycle Adventures have a range of trips including staying in an Indian village. A six dayer starting from Laredo, Texas takes in a 4000 foot climb, 25 miles of rock sand and water, followed by down hill dirt racing for six miles.... with the engine switched off! Or you can party around Baja (pronounced barhar in American) for five days. The brochure says bring 3 socks so maybe they cater for 3 legged riders too. David Grist has all the info on 01256 770775.

How about darkest Peru (where Paddington Bear came from). Take in some high mountains, Inca treasures and sand dunes in the Great Ica Desert with Inca Moto Adventures. They use 1995 Honda XR600s and supply a guide, a mechanic and a support vehicle for your luggage. Hundreds of miles of unrestricted rugged roads, plenty of high altitude, choose from Pacific coast hugging tour or over the Andes to the Amazon! H-C Travel are on 01256 770775.

## The Asian Sub-Continent

That's India to you and me. In fact we are talking from the white sandy beaches of the southern tip of India, (Chefs recommendation: Masala Dosai) to the central Himalayas (Chefs recommendation: Yak), as well as the highest roads on earth.

Take the high road and you'll be 18,380 ft above sea level on the highest road in the world at Khardung. Himalayan Motorcycle Tours offer trips (on the famous Enfield Bullet) all over India, from Kerala in the south to New Delhi, Bhutan, Bengal and the high Tibetan plain. Call Dave Grist on 01256 770775.



## Down Under (1)

New Zealand is like a slice out of Europe, long sandy beaches at one end, glacial fjords at the other. In between, Alps, lakes, volcanic plains, boiling mud and loads of sheep. Three companies run trips there, and all have representatives in the UK. And they drive on the left like us too!

Cavalier Motorcycle Adventures run tours from Christchurch NZ on the south island, giving access to all types of terrain and alternative sports, like bunjy jumping. They specialise in 'Dual-sport' tours using Honda NX250s, but also have BMW F650 for touring. Accommodation is in 'backcountry hotels', (what we might call a 'pub'), and farmstays at remote sheep stations, with 'the full monty' for breakfast and three course evening meals. Choose from seven day Alpine Highlights, 13 day Grand Circle Ride, which includes on, off and 'no' road biking. Their season runs from October to April, prices from £1275 approx. UK contact Fred Nicholas, 01803 329076, fax 01803 327798.

'Te Waipounamu' have a range of three

week tours, with different prices and levels of accommodation, and a huge range of hire bikes to chose from. You can do the North and South Islands from £850. Groups are set up but you don't have to travel in convoy, just meet up each evening to discuss your day's ride. Accommodation can be hotels or farmstays involving you in farm life too! One night available in a Maori village. Contact Fred Nicholas, 01803 329076.

## Down Under (2)

Australia is a bloody huge place, the two lane tarmac ring road (Highway 1) around the edge was started in 1836 and only finished in 1990. Outside of the cities there are no motorways,

and you'd better like riding on red dust. It gets very hot and very dry in the centre, that's why nearly all Aussies live by the coast. But there is loads of space, wilderness and variety if you travel far enough. You'll need an international driving licence for bike hire and an Australian tourist visa to get on the plane.

For a choice of different trips, from central Australia and the red desert, to the dry southern deserts, or even across lush green Tasmania, contact Motorcycle Adventures Australia. Tours are planned to take advantage of the best weather (not necessarily the hottest!). The standard hire bike is the popular Honda NX650 but smaller versions are available for smaller or less experienced riders. You have to get yourself over there, prices for 1996 tours from UK contact David Grist on 01256 770775.

An even wider choice of tours from Australian Motorcycle Adventures, and a buy back scheme if you want a bike for long term, long distance trekking. AMA run trips on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, within spitting



distance of the Barrier Reef and tropical Cape York for the more experienced, as it is 'harsh and demanding'....their words. A full range of bikes and prices, off road accommodation is usually camping, on road is motel and resort accommodation. Contact H-C Travel UK on 01256 770775.

Exclusively Cape York trips by Cape York Motorcycle Adventures, offer a variety of adventure trails, wildlife guaranteed. If you are bringing Granny and the kids they can follow you in a 4WD. Choose from two day rainforest trips, a five day adventure trail or a 12 day discovery safari which includes waterfalls, barramundi fishing, the oldest Aboriginal cave paintings and dusty gold fields. Bring a strong jacket but leave your leathers at home, it's too hot! Contact UK agent David Grist on 01256 770775.

So there you go. A veritable smorgasbord of trail riding holidays from around the world. All you have to do is make up your mind which one suits you and hand over the money. So have a nice trip, and don't forget your knotted hankie!

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# NICE FACE SHAME ABOUT THE LEGS

APRILIA RX125R

According to the brochure, the Aprilia RX125R is 'a trail bike with enduro styling', which may sound like a recipe for hot sales, yet since first being imported into the UK in May 1994 only a handful of RXs have found a home in British garages - and this despite reasonably steady demand for 125s.

On first inspection the RX125R is typical of what we have come to

expect from Italy: drop-dead gorgeous looks and superb styling based on the latest fashions in off road competition. Not everyone will appreciate the yellow, purple and pink colour-scheme of course, but in truth the reasons behind the Aprilia's disappointing sales performance lie deeper than that.

The RX may be slim and weigh only 105kg (dry), but with a seat height that is 37 inches off the deck it's not going to appeal to everyone. Even at 6' 3" I had difficulty getting both feet on the floor. Then there is the fact that in derestricted form the almost square (54 x 54.5mm) Rotax single cylinder motor pumps out a claimed 34bhp and in achieving this

fig -

ure, has undoubtedly sacrificed usable torque to the great 'god' of maximum power.

In addition, the six speed liquid cooled engine does not come with a rev counter so there is no way of knowing what sort of revs it's producing, and it feels as though the powerband is only about 500rpm wide. Engine power is controlled by the RAVE exhaust valve which works in a similar way to all the other variously named power valves, but in this application seems to be either open or shut. Allow the bike to drop out of this narrow powerband for even a second and it takes prodigious use of the six speed gearbox to find some go again. Not too much of a problem on the road, but on the trail keeping the RX in its powerband

takes some doing and frankly feels (and sounds) incredibly anti-social.

That's not to say the bike will not trickle along with a fairly imperceptible exhaust note if required, but there's no real torque available like you would find with a DT125 should you need it. Open the throttle and nothing much happens until the bike suddenly rips into that powerband with a ferocity that will surprise you for such a small capacity bike. A rev counter would certainly help ease this problem, allowing you to judge just how much throttle you brought into play. For most trail riding situations the first three gears

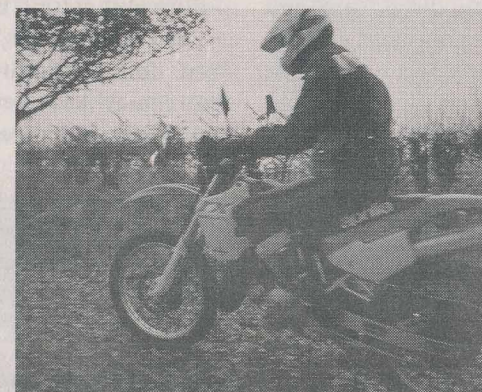
are all that's required, with fourth providing an overdrive on fast open going. Ignoring the top two cogs keeps the bike

far more under control and saves constant gear changing, though there is an optional 14 tooth front sprocket available which may well make the RX more usable for tooling along at a less dramatic pace.

At low speeds the large diameter inverted forks and multi-adjustable rising-rate suspension (Aprilia Progressive System) soak up the undulations with

consummate ease, but as this is a bike that it is practically impossible to ride slowly it seems a little strange that at the sort of velocities the bike encourages, serious bumps and jumps will cause the suspension to bottom out without much effort. It may well be my bulk that's too blame, but heavy riders using the bike seriously may find they need to firm things up a little if undue stress on the tubular steel frame is to be avoided.

On the open road the lack of creature comforts count against the RX making it feel rather ill at ease on tarmac. The Pirelli Rallycross tyres which are great off road, struggle for grip, and the bike feels flighty and rather lightweight. With plenty of power on tap the RX will of course exceed a legal 70mph by a comfortable margin, but the fun of blasting away from



With styling that is clean, simple and utterly gorgeous, there's no doubting the Aprilia's Italian origins



the lights leaving the traffic behind in a haze of two stroke oil quickly diminishes when you encounter a gradient. The lack of usable midrange will have you cursing under your breath as queues of cars, buses and vicars on push-bikes overtake you going uphill. At least when it comes to going downhill there's plenty of response from the anchors. With discs front and rear the RX pilot can be confident of hauling the bike down easily from speed. At the front the twin piston sliding caliper grips a 250mm rotor while out back there's a 220mm disc and single piston caliper to slow you down.

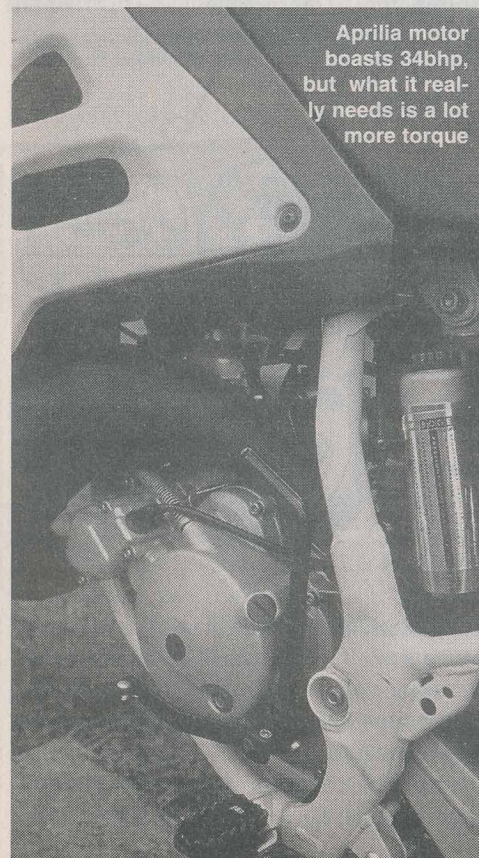
Those using the bike on the road for any distance may also find the tall, rather narrow seat is not the most comfortable

either, necessitating constant squirming about to reduce numbness. In fact the more you study the bike the more you realise that in fact this is more 'an enduro bike with trail styling' than vice-versa. There are no warning lights apart from the oil level, the speedo is calibrated in kph only, and more worryingly there's no kill switch to cut the engine either. Get it wrong and part company from the bike and you'd better hope you can grab a hold of the ignition key before the bike self-destructs in a frenzy of revs.

On the plus side the range from the 12 litre tank will allow about 100 miles between refills unless the bike lives with the RAVE power valve operating all the time - which should give a useful day's trail riding. The headlight is surprisingly good on both dip and main beams, and the centre stand makes maintenance like chain adjustment and tyre changes a real

doddle, holding the rear wheel clear of the ground.

In short then, this is a serious machine that will be wasted unless used as intended by serious and competent riders. Given a firm hand and some skill to back it up, the RX is adept at barrelling down open, undulating tracks as one might expect from a company that regularly competes in enduros at the highest level. But at £2,995 (plus OTR charges) there will only ever be a limited number of riders who will find out how focused the RX is. Expensive it may be compared to a lot of other bikes in the same category, but look on the bright side at least it won't cost a fortune to hone into a winner of the trail bike class at your local enduro.



Aprilia motor boasts 34bhp, but what it really needs is a lot more torque

## Aprilia RX125R

**Price:** £2995 plus OTR

**Engine:** Rotax two stroke water-cooled single

**Displacement:** 124.7cc

**Bore x stroke:** 54 x 54.5mm

**Carburettor:** Dell'Orto VH5B 34mm slide

**Ignition:** Electronic  
**Generator:** 12V

**Starter:** Left hand side kick

**Gearbox:** 6 speed chain drive

**Lubrication:** Separate mix with variable capacity pump.

**Frame:** Twin cradle tubular steel with box section swingarm

**Suspension:** Inverted forks, APS rear fully adjustable

**Brakes:** Front; 250mm disc with twin piston sliding caliper. Rear; 220mm rear single piston sliding caliper

**Tyres:** Front; 90/90 x 21.  
Pirelli Rally Cross  
Rear; 120/80 x 19  
Pirelli Rally Cross

**Weight:** 105kg

**Tank capacity:** 12 litres

## SPAIN

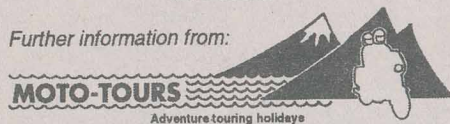
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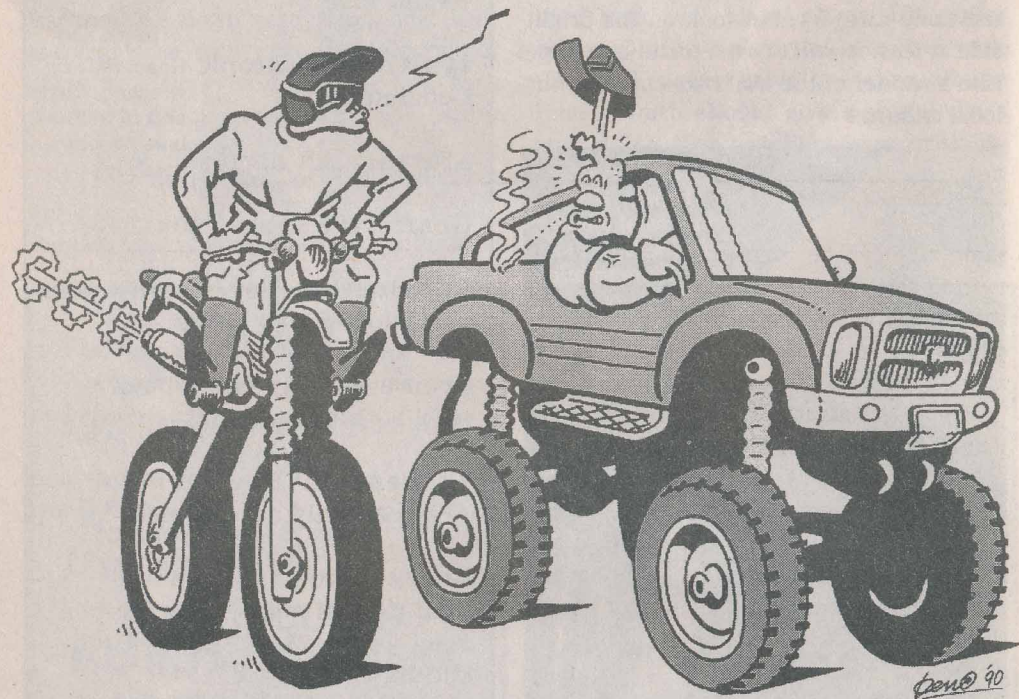
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# The Beginners Guide to trail riding

PART  
TWO

Okay so you've got your licence, you've kitted yourself out in the appropriate clobber and now you need a set of wheels on which to start trail riding. In part two of 'The Beginners Guide' we tell you how to choose a trail bike.



The first thing you need to decide before you even think about choosing a trail bike is 'what sort of riding am I going to be doing?' This will determine what sort of bike to buy and to a certain extent where to look for it. If the answer to this question is: 'I don't know',

then hopefully this will help make up your mind. If you already know what sort of riding you intend using your bike for, then it obviously makes the whole process that bit easier.

One of the best things about trail bikes is that they are so versatile. The



Road, race or wrecker: What sort of trail bike should you buy?

same bike can be used for touring, commuting and competing on, and because of their (generally) smaller capacity are usually cheap to insure, inexpensive to run and generally affordable for those people biking on a budget.

## Road and off road

For the sake of simplicity let's begin by deciding whether you need to ride regularly on the road or not. Essentially road bikes and off road bikes are at opposite ends of the motorcycling spectrum and there is a simple rule of thumb that states 350cc and over for road use, and 350cc and below for off road use. This is simply determined by the weight and power requirements for either discipline and is by no means definitive. There are numerous bikes that break the rule (Honda's XR600 for one), but it's a useful guideline for the inexperienced. That doesn't mean to say that a Yamaha DT125 for instance, won't make an good commuter bike, but

on the other hand it's not going to be your first choice of machine for riding across Europe on.

No. What you need for the road is a certain amount of power, comfort, safety, reliability and range. In other words you need a big four-stroke because they are more economical, less tiring to ride and far less prone to 'meltdown' at warp speeds. So if you think you're going to spend more time on the road than off it, take a look at any of the 600+cc trailies, which usually come with some sort of screen, decent headlights and brakes, a comfy saddle etc. The choice between twins, singles air-cooled or water-cooled is up to you and largely just a matter of personal preference. Some people prefer unsophisticated air-cooled singles arguing there's less to go wrong, but water-cooled bikes tend to run cleaner and are generally more powerful. Likewise twins are usually slightly faster and smoother than sin-

# The Beginners Guide

gles, though slightly less economical.

If on the other hand you want your trail bike to go green laning on and only really need to go short distances on the road, then 350cc (or less) is plenty. In fact what you need is something as light and manoeuvrable as possible. Power doesn't really figure since it's not often you can use it off road anyway. Two-strokes which are generally lighter and more powerful than their four-stroke equivalent, now come into their own. Again much of the time it comes down to personal preference. Some people just don't like the feel and sound of two strokes, they are thirsty, smelly and noisy and generally have more of a discernible powerband. On the other hand their simple mechanicals means maintenance is usually easy for the novice, they're often cheaper to buy secondhand, and offer more thrill for the equivalent CCs.

For many beginners their first bike may well be a 125cc learner machine, and one of the best things about 125cc trail bikes is that unlike their race-replica equivalents, they are actually very capable machines (and generally just as fast on the road as their racy counterparts). I mean 12hp is not much for a road burner but off road, particularly in the hands of a novice, it's plenty. Not only that but the learner-legal trailies tend to be full-sized machines with decent suspension and up to date

design. And once you pass your test they can be easily de-restricted to unleash somewhere in the region of 25-30hp - perfectly adequate for trailing on.

If your finances won't stretch to this then don't worry. Even a dog-rough old XL/KL/XT etc is perfectly adequate for starting on, and better than having no bike at all. After all, you can enjoy yourself learning to ride off road and not worry about damaging a pristine bike while saving up for something better. You'd be surprised at the number of people who (in all forms of sport) own the latest bit of kit and the newest clobber but still can't ride for toffee.

If you want affordable performance, one option is to consider buying a secondhand race bike - either an enduro machine or motocrosser (see elsewhere in this issue for a road test of one such machine). These can be had for relatively little money (a clean, four-five year old MX machine can be had for well under a grand), are much higher specified than trail bikes, and are certainly more powerful. But beware, there's a reason for their cheapness. Regular maintenance can eat into your budget and old motocross bikes will require money spending on them to make them road legal. Even after spending money on it you can still end up with a bike which is wholly unsuitable for trailing on (overly tall, too peaky and noisy, wrongly geared etc), so only go this route if you know what you're doing.

Enduro bikes are less of a problem (and generally a bit cheaper than trail bikes) and for this reason are popular with trail riders. Again they can be a bit of a handful if you're inexperienced, and generally less user friendly for beginners

(they tend to be taller and more peaky in terms of power output), but they're built to take the knocks and are usually already registered for the road.

Of course if you are looking for a bike on which to compete in the odd enduro or other event, you're probably better off buying a used competition machine as it'll be more suitable for eventing on than a converted trail bike. Once you've found a bike that fits your budget, your riding ability and your requirements, then a number of other factors should be considered. Does it feel comfortable? Can you reach the ground easily? Have you read about reliability problems? Can you afford to maintain it? Will it still be good enough when you grow in confidence and ability?

## Where to look

Obviously, the first place to start looking for a trailie are in the classified pages at the back of this magazine, and the dealer advertisements which are always filled with a variety of constantly changing stock (dealers are a good place to shop for a bike as they often take old trail bikes in part exchange against newer models and will offer good deals on them in order to keep stock turning over). Early in the buying season is a good time to start looking for a trail bike as road riders will often use them as cheap winter hacks, before getting rid of them in the spring when the warmer weather comes along.

Other places you should consider looking are the classified ads in TMX, MCN, and your local newspaper. Also try asking around your friends, or your friends' dads and uncles. It's surprising how many people have an old trail bike slung in the back of the garage which they'll be only too happy to see the back of for a few quid. Try putting a note in your local newsagents and be prepared to haggle to get a bargain.

## What should I buy?

There's not much point in printing a long list of good and bad bikes - the TrailBike Guide is designed to do that task - but suffice to say, spend some time considering what bike you'd like to own, asking friends their opinion, reading reviews and generally keeping your eyes and ears open. Popular bikes such as KMX200s, DR350s, XR250s and the like will always be available because of the numbers around, so if you're looking for one of these hunt out a good one and be prepared to walk away from anything that looks a little suspect. Remember, just because a bike has been used off road doesn't necessarily mean it's had a harder life than an equivalent aged road bike - ask any 350LC owner! Budget for a new chain and sprockets, the usual service items, and probably a set of handlebars, lever protectors and a pair of tyres.

Whatever you buy, remember that a trail bike is at best a compromise designed to be able to accomplish two quite different tasks. By inference it cannot be perfect at both, but it can be more than capable of combining both roles. Some bikes such as the Suzuki DR350 are very good all rounders, other such as Honda's XR250 or Yamaha's XTZ660 more inclined towards one discipline than the other. No matter... they are all trail bikes. Dual purpose in nature and more versatile than any ordinary road bike. A trail bike can take you places other bikes cannot go. They can open up new horizons, they can allow you to compete in a variety of competitions, and best of all they are great fun to ride.

Next month we tell you where you can and can't ride. How to tell a 'Green Lane' from a green lane, and list a few other places you can try your new machine out on.

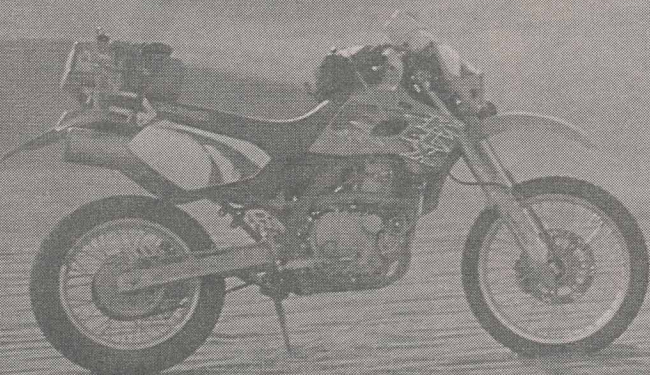




Crossing the Sahara on your trail bike is not as difficult as you might think. In the concluding part of his story, author and traveller Chris Scott tells you where to go and what to avoid

# Prep School

Part two



The Sahara fills the lion's share of ten countries, but Africa being what it is, only a few of these are accessible to those planning a trip. Well worth avoiding at the moment is Algeria, the second biggest country in Africa featuring some brilliant pistes (tracks) and a short life expectancy for foreigners found in the wrong place at the wrong time. Elsewhere, the legacies of recent or simmering conflicts, as well as jumpy governments reluctant to have unchaperoned tourists bombing around their remote nether regions, make Chad,

Sudan, and to a lesser extent, Libya, Niger and western Egypt tricky for a novice.

This leaves Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania and Mali. Tunisia is perhaps the mellowest introduction to the fringes of the Sahara and seems to be finally opening up it's sandy bits to adventurous Europeans. Morocco, south of the Atlas mountains, offers some short, spectacular and easy pistes without having to commit yourself to a full desert crossing - though it can still be a shock for the unprepared traveller. If you have a few weeks to spare, then why not keep heading south

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to Mauritania, a little known country now used by the big overland truck travel companies which you're bound to meet along the way. Once there, Mali, one of my favourite countries, is where you'll find the famed Timbuktu, around 4500 road miles from where you're sitting now.

The easiest way of getting to Morocco and the western Saharan countries is of course to ride south through France and Spain to Gibraltar, where ferries depart for the short run to Morocco, round the clock. Or you can save your tyres and take the 24-hour ferry from Portsmouth to

Bilbao or Santander in northern Spain, about 650 miles north of Gibraltar.

So there you are one sunny morning, nervously facing your first longish piste. Your tank is full, you've a good reserve of water and something to eat, and all your gear is securely strapped on. On thing you should have got into the habit of doing by now is performing daily bike checks, paying special attention to tyres, wheels and spokes, chain tension, home-made rack fittings and any other non-standard items whose performance is not a known factor.

The first thing you'll notice riding on



The desert is an awe-inspiring environment to cross by trail bike. With careful preparation anyone can do it

TrailBike -33- Magazine

the piste is that your bike handles like a dog, making the prospect of whatever lies ahead rather daunting. The momentum of all that weight you're carrying makes directional changes difficult, yet like any bit of dirt there's plenty to think about and plenty of manoeuvring to be done. Taking this into account, along with the relative remoteness of your situation, the most important thing is to take it easy until you get the hang of handling your bike off-road. Trail biking includes a fair amount of harmless spills, but the desert is no place to experiment with your riding limits. Like most bikers, I've lost count of the number of prangs I've had riding on- and off-road in England, but my Saharan chutes remain healthily in single figures, not because I'm a brilliant rider but because I'm necessarily careful: falling off is risky.

A common mistake in the first couple of days is to think that this desert biking

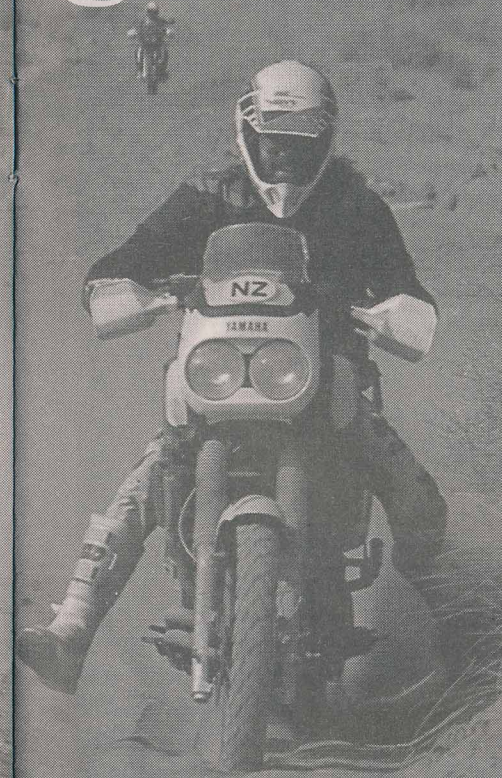
lark is easy, and progressively ride faster and faster. Eventually you'll encounter the unpredictable nature of desert terrain, with its sandy river-beds, endless corrugations, wash-outs, dips and rocks. Resolutely limit your top speed to 50mph; it feels pretty fast when you're on your own in the middle of nowhere and at this speed you have time to react to obstacles ahead while maintaining enough stability and momentum to get through patches of soft sand.

Sand can be a whole lot of fun to play in on a light bike, but when its soft and rutted by car wheels it's the most demanding and exhausting of all surfaces to ride on. Paradoxically, it's also a place where you have to ride assertively if you want to avoid eating it. The build-up of sand ahead of the front wheel - with the consequent negation of your steering's in-built castor effect - means that shutting off or even just slowing down will often



**Look before you leap:**  
Sand dunes can hold hidden dangers for the unwary rider

# Prep School



**Soft sand needs careful treatment**  
on a heavily laden trail bike

# Prep School

result in a face plant and a bike in the backside. Riding in a rut on a heavily loaded bike, keep the revs up, concentrate completely on the ground ahead and reduce your tyre pressures to around 10psi. In these conditions, knobbies will pay off making even big twin trailies amazingly manageable and sure-footed. Your bike will certainly slither around, but standing on the footrests with the gas hard on you'll soon get the hang of it.

Rutted soft sand sections are usually encountered when crossing or riding along dried river beds (oueds or wadis, where fine, soft sand tends to accumulate), but consider that the tracks to Timbuktu are like this for up to 200 miles you can imagine it can get very tiring!

And don't think you'll be riding day after day across virgin dunes. They can be amazing to ride on, but the lack of perspective and shade you'll encounter in the midst of dunes at high sun angles gives a strangely disorienting feeling that you have to experience to fully appreciate. Unless you keep to clear tracks you can find yourself running into a slip face (the steep, soft side of a dune) without even 'seeing' it, or worst still, shooting off the top of a slip face at speed (a dramatic manoeuvre known colloquially as a 'Hubert'). The landing might be soft but your bike cart wheeling towards you definitely isn't: going over the 'bars and being struck by your bike is the most common biking injury in the desert. Dunes are best seen as a good place to muck about unladen in the evenings when the long shadows give more definition, not somewhere to blaze new trails.

When riding on sand, accelerate, turn and brake gradually to maintain full trac-

tion and thereby predictable control of your bike. Wheel spin can be hard to avoid, but there'll be plenty of occasions when you get sideways involuntarily without doing so for fun. Don't use your brakes at all on very soft sand, just roll to a halt or the trench you carve out with a locked wheel will keep you there when you try and move off. Riding on sand requires using your head, throttle and riding skill in equal measures. It can be exhausting but when you start getting the hang of it, it's also brilliant fun!

While you're concentrating on not falling off you'll also need to be paying special attention to navigation - another crucial aspect to independent biking in the desert. Rarely will you find yourself riding across virgin desert on a compass bearing, more commonly you'll be riding in a known direction on a clear piste marked with occasional posts (balises), stone cairns or oil drums (bidons). Riding in the Sahara on a bike can be seen as a series of mildly anxious stages between safe points; usually places with fuel and water that are typically a couple of hundred miles apart - about two days riding.

A corrugated (washboard-surfaced) track may be hard on the suspension, but it means it's frequently used and therefore probably the right place to be on. However, in the Sahara pistes on the flat plains can be up to twenty miles wide, as vehicles wander in a common direction searching for the best surface - they also have an annoying habit of petering-out altogether.

Before setting off on a lonely piste, besides all your other duties, you should scrutinise your map and try to roughly estimate the terrain and principle land-

marks ahead. Make a route card and stick it on your tank noting major features such as: 'Total distance to next fuel, 240km', '60km, small village, track forks west', '95km, large mountain on left', '140km, track turns northeast off main route'. Zero your trip meter (an essential device that saves subtracting complicated total speedo mileages) so that the features can be anticipated as the approximate figure rolls onto the clock.

Keep an eye out on your orientation (north, east, southwest, etc) too. You don't need pinpoint accuracy down to a couple of degrees, just a knowledge that you haven't ridden onto a subsidiary track that's leading you in the wrong direction. The easiest way to know your orientation is to keep an eye on the sun (plenty of that in the Sahara), and the time. In the northern hemisphere the sun rises in the east, is more or less to your south at midday (i.e. shadows point north) and sets in the west. Knowing that your track is generally heading from west to east, for example, you should have the sun in your face in the morning, to your right at midday and behind you in the afternoon. After a few days in the wilderness you'll be a right old bushmaster, able to tell the time or your orientation with a wily glance at the sun, and the location of a nearby oasis with a mere sniff.

A compass is useful for taking more precise bearings such as when accurately assessing your position from two known landmarks (for example, the track you're on and a distinctive natural feature that's marked on the map).

There's a growing range of handheld GPS satellite navigation units now available from outdoor and sailing shops for as

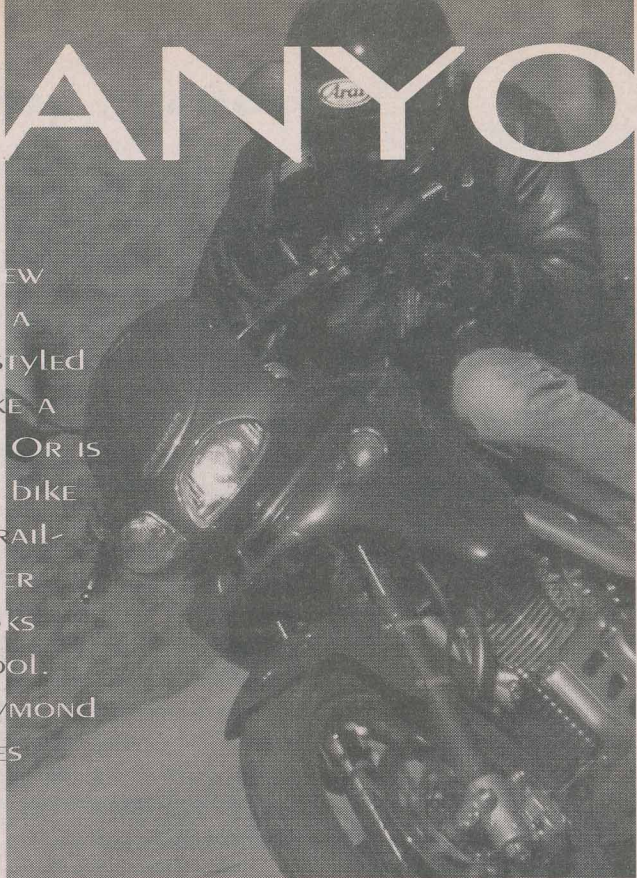
little as £180. What these mobile phone-sized gadgets can do is tell you your exact position (in latitude and longitude within 100m) anywhere in the world in a matter of minutes. This information can then be translated onto a map, ideally with a scale of 1:1,000,000 or more (i.e. a smaller number). However GPS units should only be seen as aids to navigation; they do not replace the essential observational skills outlined above. You may know exactly where you are on the map and, if lost, where you may have made a mistake, but you still have to find the right way to go from there and know how to correctly interpret the landmarks marked on a map. Finally, if you do get lost, don't just carry on hoping things will work out. Stop, assess the situation and try and work out your mistake before you waste too much precious fuel.

I've outlined some of the dangers and necessary precautions of riding alone in a hostile environment such as The Sahara, but don't let these put you off. Taking a trail bike across the desert is an uplifting experience available to anyone with a bit of common sense. At the end of the day whether you achieve your goal is in your own hands. Go for it and best of luck.

These features are only meant as a guide to some of the essentials of riding and navigating in the desert. There's plenty more on these, and other thrilling subjects in *Desert Biking, A Guide to Independent Motorcycling in the Sahara*, by Chris Scott available for £10.99 from the Travellers' Bookshop (Tel 0171 836 9132). Is that a plug, or what?

# CANYON

CAGIVA'S NEW CANYON IS A ROADSTER STYLED TO LOOK LIKE A TRAIL BIKE. OR IS IT A ROAD BIKE INSPIRED TRAIL-STER? EITHER WAY IT LOOKS PRETTY COOL. KEVIN RAYMOND INVESTIGATES



**T**he press blurb is full of phrases like, 'functionality and simplicity', 'for modern, dynamic people', and 'splitting head pivoted on a monolithic shaft'. Nope, we don't know what the last one means, either, but the general thrust is that the Canyon is a new, bold, and exciting venture designed to grab Cagiva a bigger slice of the important middleweight class.

Trail styled roadsters are not new

anymore but that doesn't make them passé — any big single with sticky tyres, good suspension and a neat styling job is onto a winner, as far as I'm concerned. Whether the British buying public will agree is another matter — they've never really understood this type of bike, as the slow sales of TDMs, Dominators and the like have proved over the years.

But then, they've probably never been to where Cagivas are made. If they had, they'd understand where the Canyon is coming from, in both senses of the phrase.

# FODDER

TrailBike -38- Magazine

Kevin Raymond



Natty headlights help give the Canyon a cute, bug-eyed look, but it's the handling that inspires

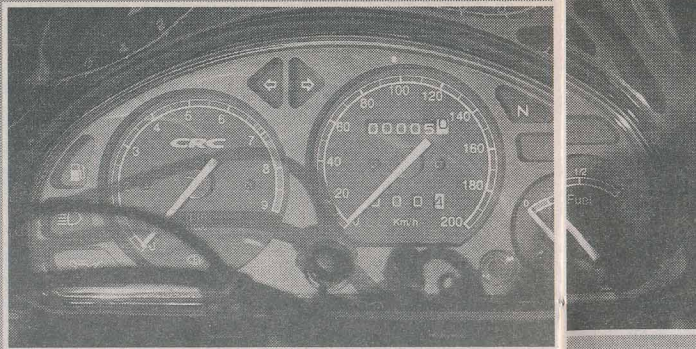
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# CANYON

The roads around the firm's base in Varese, in Italy's Lake District, are a mixture of urban sprawl and fabulous unspoiled country backroads. Unspoiled by the attentions of the 'straighten every bend, flatten every hump' school of road 'improvement' that's already taken the fun out of biking in the South East of England and is rapidly working its way across the country. But they're also unspoiled by the attentions of road sweepers and pothole menders.

All in all they're a happy hunting ground for the Canyon's blend of light weight, easy power delivery and equally easy flop-it-in, gas-it-out handling. Okay, but you could say that about virtually any trail bike (except, perhaps, my shagged out old Honda XL, which steers better one way than the other, and handles like a lorry). But the Canyon manages it without being stupidly high off the floor, without motocross-refugee styling, and without a skinny, road-useless front tyre. You'd be surprised how many people are put off by the first two. You could take an educated guess at how many people are spat off by the third.....

The Canyon's seat is low enough so even shorties like me can hold the thing up without pulling thigh muscles. Just as well, since, the Canyon features a typically Italian flip-up sidestand that will lead to much swearing and more than a few insurance claims. The seat also puts you a bit further forwards than on most 'pure' trail bikes, which is a big plus on the road. Basically, off road you want a rear weight bias to take the emphasis off the front tyre on loose

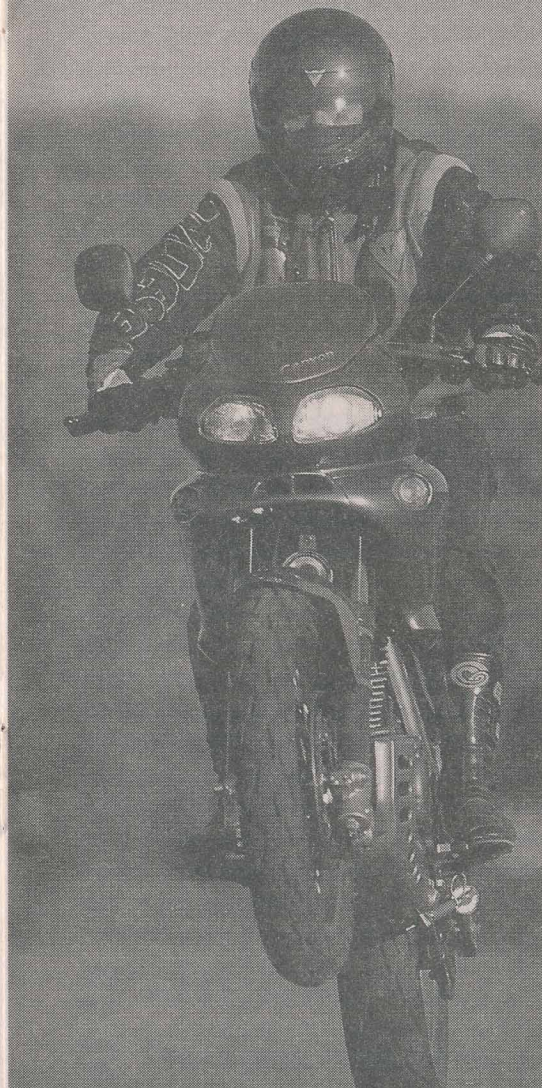
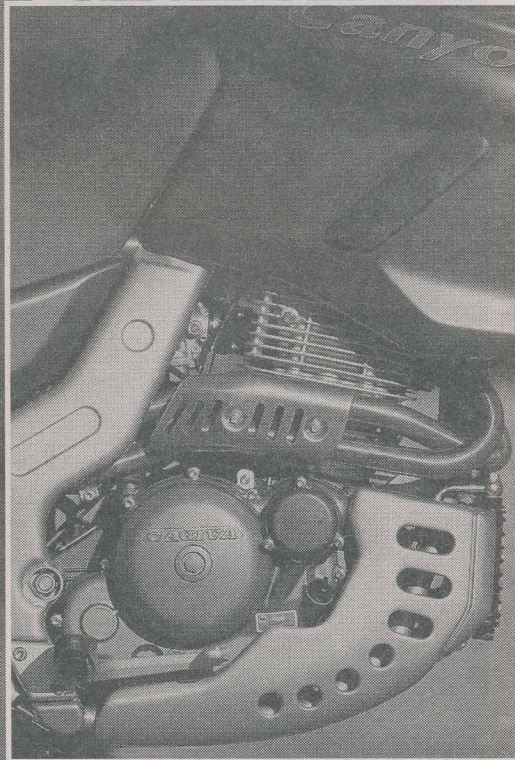


Canyon designed to have the flexibility, comfort and riding position of a trailie, with the handling of a sportster. It works well - but not off road

**ABOVE:** Clear dials include a useful fuel gauge in the neat dash layout

**BELOW:** You might recognise that engine, it's the same 34hp lump that powers the W16 trail bike

# CANYON



# FODDER

surfaces. On road you want more weight over the front to help you feel just what the front tyre's up to all the time. The tyres themselves are Dunlop Trailmaxes, and whilst they are completely and utterly useless off road, they warm up nicely and grip like crazy on tarmac. They're okay on the brakes, too, with none of the squirming you'd usually associate with huge open tread blocks under strain.

Basically, on twisty roads you ride the Canyon like a Supermoto — steam up to your chosen bend, pin the front end right down on the brakes, throw the bike sideways, grab a handful of throttle to pick it up again and power out, shortshifting away towards the next bend. It's a point and squirt technique that wouldn't work on most sportsbikes (too heavy, too powerful), or most trail bikes (not enough front end grip or brakes). But it's the Canyon's balance which makes this easy, and the fact there's only 34 ponies waiting to get out through the back tyre, so a handful of gas isn't likely to spit you off.

That ease of use is the Canyon's trump card. It's designed to appeal to people who probably wouldn't buy a 'real' trail bike, but who wouldn't want something as dull as Cagiva's other 600-class effort, the River. Mr Target Buyer is likely to be a daily commuter who wants to have a bit of fun at the weekends. He's likely to be a new rider, tempted away from public transport or, more likely, a Piaggio scooter. Let's face it, he's also going to be European, by which I mean Italy, France, Spain, and anywhere else that a tasty styling job is at least as important as a whether the bike's actually any good.

And a tasty styling job it has most certainly got, with its bug-eyed lights, sweep-

# CANYON



**No of course that isn't meant to happen - but remember this thing is Italian. Flip-up document holder probably was a good idea at the design stage, its execution however leaves a little to be desired**

that he is currently working on a replacement to the Elefant, closely based on the styling of the Canyon, and probably to be called the Grand Canyon when it's launched next Autumn. Since Cagiva's top brass had spent much of the previous night's press conference strenuously denying such a project existed, he probably lost a few Brownie points down Varese way. Maybe he'll get them back again for the way the Canyon works so well as a complete package — some of the components may look down-spec, but add them all together and the result is anything but.

The only bit of the bike that does stand out as a bit of an extravagance is the front suspension. The Marzocchi forks are a massive 45mm in diameter, and are based on the Magnum range of Motocross forks used on, amongst others Husqvarna 'crossers and enduro irons. In this guise they're set up soft — far too soft for anything other than gentle off-road forays unless you want the mudguard to smash into the top fairing. On the road, that's not such a problem, except under heavy braking in the dark, when all of a sudden you can't see where you're going 'cos the headlight's now pointing at a spot a couple of inches ahead of the front tyre. Again, that riding position makes a difference here — the weight transfer to the front under braking is magnified, making this a bike that's easier to stoppie than it is to wheelie.

On the subject of wheelies, a jerk of the throttle doesn't do any more than

extend the forks. You need walking pace, a fistful of throttle and clutch together, and one foot over the back brake just in case. Once it's up there, though, a quick flick to second, and the soft-tune engine makes it easy to hold it up. The balance is fine enough for rudimentary bodyweight steering, too. But there's no shortage of bikes that can pull good wheelies, and the Canyon'll be relying more on its balance and handling than on mono-wheeling competence.

So what sort of bikes is it likely to take sales away from? Cagiva admit the Canyon is targeted squarely at BMW's dumpily-styled F650. The Bee Em's probably a bit more sensible, and possibly better built, but it'll cost you seven hundred quid extra. Honda's Dominator is superbly built and finished, but has had a bit of a charisma by-pass - and it's even more expensive than the Bee Em. Aprilia's Pegaso? Slightly faster, slightly better handling and slightly more expensive. Certainly, the only things that come close on price are.... well, there's nowt at the price at all — even Kawasaki's flat-as-a-pancake KLE500 and Yamaha's excellent but ageing XT600E come in a couple of hundred up on the Canyon. Personally, I'd rather have the Pegaso just so's I've got the option of a bit of mud-plugging if I want to, but if you're in the market for a towns-and-backlanes tool that's got some pose value, as well as all the comfort and vision advantages of a big trailie, then at £4,290 (plus OTR charges), the Canyon's well worth a look.

**+** Styling, handling, brakes

**-** Build quality, power output

# FODDER

## CAGIVA CANYON

**Price:** £4,290  
**Engine:** Watercooled, sohc, four valve, single  
**Capacity:** 601.4cc  
**Bore x Stroke:** 102 x 73.6  
**Compression Ratio:** 7.8:1  
**Carburettor:** 1 Mikuni BST40  
**Transmission:** 5 Speed gearbox, Chain drive  
**Forks:** Marzocchi 45mm  
**Shock:** Boge  
**Front Brake:** 296mm disc  
**Rear Brake:** 240mm disc  
**Front tyre:** 100/90 19  
**Rear tyre:** 140/80 17  
**Weight:** 152kg  
**Wheelbase:** 1463mm  
**Seat Height:** 795mm (31.3in)

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ing lines and stainless twin pipes. Sort of curvy and angular at the same time, with aesthetic nods to sportsbikes, scooters and the insect world. Daft touches include the aforementioned flip-up stand, the badly-positioned oil cooler, a lack of a proper rear mudshield to protect pipes and shock, and the pop-open document compartment where you'd expect a clear screen. This last isn't lockable, so you wouldn't leave you documents in it anyway, and is prone to snapping off at the hinge if you open it too vigorously. None of them major worries, but all quite clearly typically Italian. Well, not really; the designer is one Pierre Terblanche, late of South Africa and, we trust, no relation to the rabid right wing white supremacist of similar moniker.

Incidentally, Mr, Terblanche let slip

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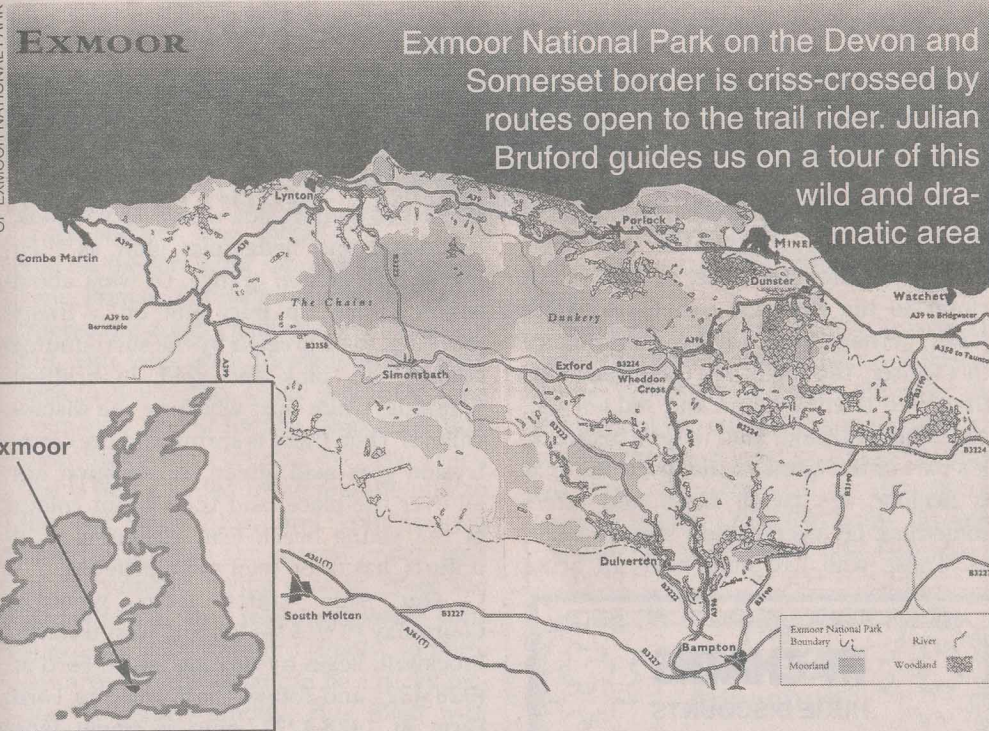
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# The rough guide to Britain

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OF EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK



Exmoor National Park on the Devon and Somerset border is criss-crossed by routes open to the trail rider. Julian Bruford guides us on a tour of this wild and dramatic area

The larger part of Exmoor lies in West Somerset with mile upon mile of outstanding natural beauty leased in perpetuity by the National Trust. From these high moors a hundred streams tumble down from wooded combs in their race to the sea. The highest point on Exmoor and, indeed of all Somerset, is Dunkery Beacon whose cairn rises 1707ft above sea level. On a clear day, 16 counties can be seen from the summit.

There are few places in the world where you can open the door and step out into a national park. Exmoor is such a place. Resident or visitor, at the drop of a hat we can head off into the hills to blow those cares away, returning some hours later refreshed and invigorated, and with a rosier perspective on life. At least that's the theory, in practice, those of us who live here, often find the bustle of everyday life encroaching on our free time; weeks, months, years go by and the golden countryside seen from the kitchen window or glimpsed from the car, remains a remote promise. It is the visitor who has chosen Exmoor for that precious weekend, who really has the opportunity to appreciate it; whose gaze can stretch for miles unrestrained, gathering in its enduring beauty. It is the visitor who can sit astride his trail bike and set off for a day of fresh air and freedom; ride along a river bank, down untarred roads and the next green lane

# The rough guide to Britain

that will be totally different from the last. Or pause and observe the red deer or wild ponies and other wildlife, whilst another rider removes a tyre to mend a puncture.

It is different for those who live here, the countryside interweaves with their daily lives. They live closer to nature, but closer to the elements too. Earth, wind, water, perhaps snow, will be in abundance this winter. You might see the farmer battling with relentless rain and sodden soil, squelching through mud to tend his stock. It's part of the fabric of the place. But that is Exmoor, it's rough hewn and offers something far deeper than surface beauty. Those who live here have an acute

awareness of the changing seasons. They know that Exmoor is there to be enjoyed throughout the year, not just in summer months. Autumn is the most glorious time. Burnished countryside wherever you look. Woodland and hedgerows glow as their leaves turn golden orange. Or what about winter riding up Bury Hill on a frosty morning, to be greeted by the surrounding countryside, pink and gold, in brilliant sunshine, white mist whispering the distant valleys? Then there is spring and the countryside goes mad, green shoots burst out all over the place, and the vibrant colour of the young beech leaf, glistening as it unfurls, has to be seen to be believed.

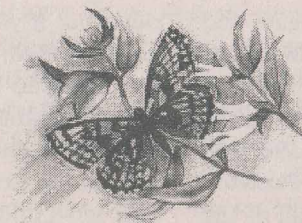
Our ride starts from Wootton Courtenay (938,434) looking west towards Brockwell. Begin by turning left to Ford at (928,432) and follow the tarmac to Ford Farm at (928,427), onto a rough lane towards Hole Cross and turn right into Digland Lane. This lane is an ideal introduction to Exmoor but should be ridden with care because of the deep ruts created by agricultural machinery over the years. I have found by experience that on this particular lane you need to stand up on the footpegs with second gear selected, and 'go for it'. At the end of this lane, again onto tarmac at (928,419) turn left and continue onwards to Elscombe Lane at (934,417) which is a very interesting sunken holloway thanks to generations of travellers passing over it. Hedged on both sides with a great variety of trees, the base surface at the beginning is stones but ends in the typical red Somerset mud!

When you approach the tarmac at the

end, turn right at Harwood Cross (944,414) and proceed down the hill turning right onto the A396. Within a very short distance another lane awaits

you on the left hand side known as Slade Lane. Prepare yourself mentally for a very interesting uphill challenge, not too steep, but with large rock formations you may wish to avoid. Once safely past these keep your eyes peeled for the deep gully that flash floods have created over the years; this is best avoided by aiming the bike to the left hand side, and continue on upwards through the narrow grassy lane to the summit, taking care to avoid the farmer's dogs who may have heard your approach. They are not friendly, so press onwards through what can be a tricky section of grassy, muddy, ruts filled with water, plus the odd stony ledge that could take you off.

At the main road turn right (uphill) to Couple Cross and turn right again into Kersham Lane, which is a rough, unclassified road twisting and turning downhill to Putham ford. Once through the shallow ford, prepare yourself for another good, ancient old road that has one or two tricky bits to negotiate. Here take time to stop and let a little air out of the rear tyre making it a bit easier to pick out the easiest route over the variety of stony slabs covered by flowing water. Congratulate yourself if you make it over these interesting rock formations without having to put a foot down and continue on up this narrow lane to another main road. Go



straight on into the village of Wheddon Cross looking out for the interesting old thatched cottages on your left hand side - one of which my grandmother used to live in - and to your right is the highest point on Exmoor.

Having turned right at the crossroads onto the B3224, continue to Luckwell Bridge (906,387) and turn left over the bridge looking out for the pretty church on the left hand side. At (902,376) turn left into Ison Lane, and go straight on towards Oldrey (902,376) going through the gate on the left hand side. Continue a

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little further on to yet another gate and keeping to the left, continue onwards to Upcott Cross where on the left hand side you will see a large green barn. At the main road, turn left onto the A396, and then at (921,351) turn right into Battleton Brake which starts with a crossing of the River Exe. Once safely across, turn right and go for approx 500yds to another gate followed by another slippery section over slabs of rock, immediately after which you must turn sharp right into a muddy section and yet another gate.

Continue onwards to one of the most delightful of Exmoor's villages (and the birthplace of Ni Bevan), that has not only petrol and refreshments to offer the trail

rider, but if you care to look, seven pack-horse bridges and a recently restored thatched pub called the Royal Oak which was almost totally destroyed by fire early last year. Continue in a northerly direction on the Exford road to (896,364) and turn left into Kemps Lane. Now begins a stony climb to the summit - albeit bisected by a number of gates. At the next metalled road (872,386) turn left to Stone Cross continuing with caution across the main road, past stone pillars on each side of what looks like a private drive. Pass through these onto a superb lane consisting of more slippery slabs of rock and stopping to look at a great lump of granite on which is carved (in Latin):

*Here lie the remains of  
Darby Haddonis & Cherry  
Haddonis  
may they hunt successfully  
[all] who ride past this stone*

After the second gate ride on to the metalled road, turning left to Hillhead Cross, and left again to (847,388). Now turn right to (844,392) where you need to turn left through another ford, bearing right up the hill and keeping the throttle nailed for the left turn and subsequent steep rocky sections - trying hard not to annoy Michael Heseltine who lives nearby! At (837,391) take a left turn to White Cross along the B3224. Now turn right to (805,394) and then left towards (806,380) and Kitridge Lane. Finally you'll come into Withypool village where petrol is available if required.

Cross the River Barle by bridge and follow the heather clad route to the point (832,342) on your map. Forget the metalled road and follow the track in front of you which is called Porchester's Post - another ancient highway traversing wild Exmoor with a variety of rutted grooves to ride and some green sections between the heather and gorse. The track is very easy to follow provided it's not foggy because Exmoor National Park have driven in oak posts (which you should keep to your right) to guide you across the iffy bits. A couple of years ago the park authorities attempted to stop trail riders

from using this route by claiming motorcycles were the cause of the damage! Local riders together with the TRF's Rights of Way Officer Tim Stevens, defended this allegation and agreed to comply with a 'voluntary restraint' lasting for six months. In addition, Somerset TRF members along with other volunteers, assisted Exmoor National Park in digging drainage channels across the route to assist the flow of water away from the deep ruts created by 4x4s which are known to use this route whilst supporting local stag hunts.

At the first gate stop to take in the scenery - you won't be disappointed. And at the second, having ridden the avenue of beech trees where glimpses of the deer may be had, turn left up a stony compacted route to a hedge ahead of you, turn left again and follow this hedge to a metalled road. The last time I rode this way someone had gone to the trouble of tipping a large load of earth and stones across the way, presumably to prevent 4x4s from using it, however, it has turned out to the trail riders advantage as it creates another obstacle on which to exercise your riding skills.

You are now at White Post where often herds of wild Exmoor ponies can be seen grazing in the distance. Turn left and ride the bitumen to Tarr Post (847,313), taking a left to Rowdown Wood. Now turn right down a bumpy old lane through woods to the bottom. If



Culbone stone

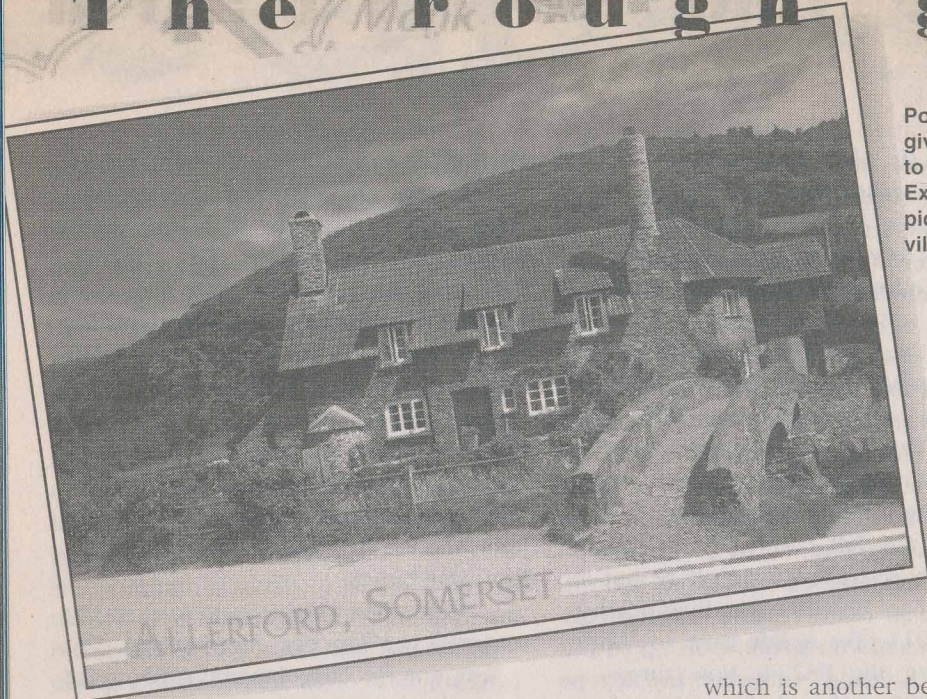
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# The rough guide to Britain



Postcards give a guide to some of Exmoor's picturesque villages.

you're not pressed for time take the opportunity to turn around and ride it uphill, as it's much more fun. Back to the bottom of this lane turn left onto the main road and ride to Tarr Steps one of the finest old clapper bridges in Britain.

More than 180 feet long, five feet wide, and dating from 1400AD, no mortar is used to hold the bridge's stones together, yet only twice in its history (so far as we know) have the stones been dislodged by the waters that rush down from the hills after persistent rain. (The last occasion was the Lynmouth flood disaster in 1952). This ford can be deep at times but on the other side refreshments can be had in the premises perched high up on the left, and a discount is given on the production of a current TRF membership card.

Back-tracking a little to (860,317) turn left to (861,306) riding into Row

which is another beauty of a lane with five gates along its route. Over the bridge at (884,297), turn right to pick up the metalled road at Hinham Cross. Here turn left and then left again at the fork to Marsh Bridge (907,290), then turn left again at (911,287) into another stony track called Loosehall Lane and ride to (912,299). Turn right and ride across Court Down on Heleball Lane to Jury Cross (926,277). Here turn left onto the B3222 to (936,277) and left again to (938,282) to yet another challenge, uphill to the meeting place of red deer. At (938,287) turn right onto the metalled road and at Machine Cross (936,276) turn left and follow the road across the shallow ford and at (946,272) you will find a lane that is one of the best that Exmoor has to offer.

When you reach the metalled road turn right at (952,259) and then right again onto the B3190, at (930,260), and continue to (929,295) taking the lane on the right into Brockhole Woods. This I

believe will be your greatest experience on a motorcycle for the day. At the end of this route turn left and follow the tarmac to (937,339) at Broadlane Head, turn left into Exton (925,366) and right into another muddy lane with a shallow ford to cross. At the end of this lane turn right onto the A396 heading north to Bushel Bridge at (917,381) and turn left into Thorne Lane, turning right at Oldrey Cross and following the lane ridden earlier to Luckwell Bridge. At (906,386) look for the lane between two cottages. Here there is one final uphill rocky climb to be enjoyed (but take care when negotiating the metalled road crossing into the next lane ahead of you). Follow on up to the road at Longlane Head, bearing left to

Dunkery Gate, then turning right all the way to Webbers Post (904,438), where you should turn right to a village called Luccombe.

Luccombe is T-shaped, and you should follow the track down into Stony Street which begins with two cottages standing slightly isolated from the main village. The cottages are the colour of clotted cream, the thick thatch and tall round chimneys typical of the area. When you get here turn right and navigate an easterly way back to your starting point at Wootton Courtenay. If you're still hungry for more and wish to stay another day the Brendon and Quantock Hills lie just a few miles to the east and are also well worth exploring.



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# the TRAILBIKE GUIDE

We don't claim this to be the definitive guide to all the trailbikes ever made, merely the sum total of our collective knowledge, trawled from the depths of dim and distant memories and assembled in some sort of order that you may find useful. What we do know is that no-one produces a guide to trail bikes that is as comprehensive as this, and that if you think there are revisions we should make, bikes that need adding to the list or merely things we've got wrong please feel free to write them down on a scrap of paper and stick it up your nose. Thank you.

#### APRILIA

Italian concern assembling rather than actually manufacturing bikes. In their short history they've enjoyed much competition success, and the products are generally well made, up to the minute and above all stylish.

**RX125:** w/c, 2-str, single. Superb, modern trailbike in both learner legal and full power form. Peaky and powerful engine with great suspension, and massive amounts of pose. Useful off-road. *Verdict: A modern Italian DT.*

**Tuareg 50/125:** w/c, 2-str, single. Smart little trailbike with Paris-Dakar styling cues designed to encounter nothing more hostile than Rome's potholed streets.

**Tuareg 125 Rally:** w/c, 2-str, single. Outrageously good looking Paris-Dakar styled trailie with a high spec inc USD forks, fully adjustable suspension etc. High seat height more than made up for by poseability.

**Pegaso 125:** 242lbs/110kg, 124cc, w/c, 2-str, single with a claimed 31bhp.

**Tuareg 600/650:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered single, e/s. Paris-Dakar lookalike with a high specification (USD forks etc), and flashy paintjob. Reasonably light and not overly tall for this type of bike, nice machine if you can find one. *Verdict: Posing tackle that works.*

**Pegaso 650:** 1992-on, 348lbs/157kg, w/c, dohc, 4-str, e/s single, with a claimed 50bhp. Stylish and quick trailie using poky 5-valve Rotax engine, good for about 110mph with cornering to match. Lighter than the BMW F650 and the Pegaso's twin exhaust is much better tucked in, but it has a much higher, less comfortable seat (36 inches) and fewer layers of paint. 19 inch front wheel limits tyre choice, and beware iffy sidestand, cunningly hidden fuel tap and small reserve. Capable big trailie both on and off the road and good value. *Verdict: Flying horse, flies high.*

#### ARMSTRONG

Grew out of Jeff Clews' CCM company of Bolton and CanAm/Bombardier bikes for the army. (Bombardier were originally a French Canadian

company that manufactured snowmobile engines - they are now a massive worldwide engineering company that owns Rotax, among others).

**250:** a/c, 2-str, singles (Bombardier engines).  
**500:** a/c 4-str, singles (Rotax engines) with left hand kick starts.

**CCM:** A few enduro bikes based on the moto-crossers).

**NB:** Armstrong sold out to Harley Davidson who now build 350cc electric start versions of the old 500s for the army.

**ATK:** a/c 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered singles. US-made, high quality motocrossers with some unusual features such as engine-sprocket mounted rear brake on some models. All have one-sided monoshocks (without linkage). Dual sport bikes now produced by the importer using converted MX bikes, solid, unburstable but pricey. *Verdict: For those who hanker after something different.*

**BARIGO:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered singles. French-made range of specialist on/off road bikes built by Patrick Barigault. They specialise in supermotard bikes and desert racers, both of which have had some competition success, though they also do a trail/enduro bike. The same basic rotax mill that in MZ guise churns out 32bhp produces a claimed 60bhp when tuned to Barigo's specification... but they say it's reliable. *Verdict: Gallic charm.*

#### BMW

Traditional air-cooled, pushrod boxer flat twins. Some rare collectibles: early pre-G/S ISDT boxers which weigh only 320lbs! Genuine Paris-Dakar machines. Specialist builders: Schek and HPN. UK expert: Jon Watson-Miller at Bracken motorcycles in South East London (0171-231-9438).

**R80G/S:** 374lbs, a/c, 4-str, 797cc, twin. One of the first mega-trailies. Launched in 1981, Monolever rear end, kick and optional electric start. Special big-bore versions of which took Hubert Auriol and Gaston Rahier to four Paris-Dakar wins. Original 'Paris-Dakar' version of G/S

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

was just the standard model with a big tank and bore no relation to the real desert racers, which were built specially by Herbert Schek. The most trailable of all the Beemers distinguishable by its high front mudguard and simple instruments. *Verdict: The one to go for.*

**R100G/S:** 1988-on, 220kg/484lbs, a/c, 4-str, twin, e/s. More powerful 60bhp engine complete with double-jointed drive shaft (Paralever) and much improved suspension front and rear. Colours were white/blue and black/yellow (the wonderful 'bumble-bee') with mini-fairing. One of the most versatile motorcycles on the planet with neat panniers, clock and heated handlebars all available from the BMW catalogue. Superb go-anywhere tourer with surprising off-road-ability but a bit thirsty on the motorway (35mpg). *Verdict: A two-wheeled Land Rover.*

**R100GS:** a/c, 4-str, twin, e/s. Revised in 1991 with proper fairing and more garish paint job. Final revision for UK in 1993 with 'P-D' version when humungous plastic tank (already available on the continent) finally became legal, also sported a set of external fairing crash bars. Single-seat with extra large rack available as option. Last officially imported in 1994. *Verdict: Big and butch.*

**R80GS:** a/c, 4-str, twin, e/s. Small bore version of the above with same dimensions and 50bhp.

**R1100GS:** 1994-on. 209kg/461lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, 8-valve, 1086cc, twin, e/s, 5-speed, 80bhp. Mega-Monster trailie based around the brand new four-valve boxer engine mated to Telelever chassis. Huge stomp plus ABS which can be turned off if desired. Superb road bike but not nearly as off-roadable as the old boxers. Recall in '94 for problems with Telelever ball joints. *Verdict: The first trailie superbike.*

**F650 'Funduro':** w/c, 4-str, dohc, 652cc, single, e/s, 48 bhp (claimed). Aprilia-built, Rotax-engined trail bike launched in 1993 to bring BMWs to the masses. Based on Aprilia's Pegaso, but with four valves instead of five, more expensive, heavier and more 'roadified', with larger tank, stainless exhaust and much lower seat, although still eminently trail-able. Great fun to ride on or off road, and surprisingly quick - these babies will make a genuine 46bhp at the rear wheel. Beware clunky gearboxes, 19in front wheel limits tyre choice. Sold like hot cakes thanks to legendary BMW build quality. *Verdict: Solid and sensible.*

### CAGIVA

Italian manufacturer that now owns Ducati, Husqvarna and Morini.

**W4:** w/c, 2-str, 50/80cc, single, 6-speed gear-box trail moped. Looks like a pukka enduro tool but restricted model wouldn't pull the skin off a rice pudding. 80cc version much better bet.

**Super City:** 125kg/276lbs, w/c, 2-str, 124cc single, e/s, 7-speed, 34bhp. Outrageously styled super-moto available in learner legal and unrestricted flavours. Even the full power model is hard work due to peaky and raucous engine inherited from the Mito sports bike. Fast and handles well with sticky road tyres. Could be fun for humiliating bigger bikes on the road but otherwise pretty pointless. Makes a TDR feel civilised. Off road? Only for super-moto racing, for which it had its own class in France. *Verdict: Teenage kicks.*

**WMX500DE:** 1986-88, w/c, 2-str, single. Strange specialist desert racer with large tank, limited lock and high quality components. Very few around.

**W8:** 264lbs, w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single, 6-speed, 31hp. Excellent trailbike version of above but with a couple of ponies less and no upside down forks. very few sold in UK.

**T4:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 450cc, single. A few imported to UK in 1989 by Moto Vecchia. Fore-runner to W12 and W16. Plastic tank holds 4 gals. e/s option as well as kickstarter. Alloy rims and swing arm. Poxxy rose joints on gearchange broke early on.

**W12:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 350cc, 4-valve, single, e/s 6-speed, 25bhp. Simple, no frills trailbike (as used by Italian army), a bit like an Italian XT350 but not as tough. Very few were sold in UK. *Verdict: Something different.*

**W16:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 601cc, 4-valve, single, e/s, 34bhp. Tasty looking, but a little underpowered at only 34bhp for new learner laws. Looks similar to Yam XT600E but lighter, lower and more colourful - and less robust off-road.

**Elefant:** mid-eighties. o-a/c, 4str, desmo, V-twin. Engine originally derived from Ducati Pantah. Started as 650cc in mid-eighties, grew to 750cc by 1988, though there was a smaller 350cc version available to suit learner laws in other countries.

**Elefant 350:** o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s. Middleweight version of the lovely 750, with much less power but almost the same weight. Not many imported for the simple reason that no-one really wanted one. *Verdict: Curiosity value only.*

**Elefant 750:** 1988-1990. 188kg/414lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s.

Distinctive looking big trailie with white/red/blue/blue paintwork, angular styling and gold anodised rims (21 inch F, 17 inch R).

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

750 motor was nice, but suffered from poor carburetion at bottom end thanks to Bing carbs. Nimble handling and good off road ability.

**Elefant 750/900 (Second generation):** o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s, 60bhp/68bhp (claimed). Second generation Elefants from 1991-ish are bigger, and slightly heavier than their predecessors. Lovely torquey engines are based on the Ducati 750 and 900SS. 1991 versions (distinguishable by Lucky Explorer paintscheme), were higher spec than later ones, with Ohlins suspension and electronic fuel injection. Although they have a high CofG the new generation Elefants make a great touring bike for the road, but they're a bit monstrous off-road - more like a Super Tenere than the original Transalp-sized 750s. *Verdict: For those who like to be seen and heard.*

### ENFIELD INDIA

**Bullet trail:** a/c, 4-str, ohv, single. Indian made version of the venerable Royal Hen, now with 12v electrics and sprung saddle option. *Verdict: Strictly for masochists everywhere.*

### GAS-GAS

**Pampera:** 85kg/187lbs, w/c, 2-str, 238cc, single, 6-speed. Brand new hybrid trail bike from top Spanish trials manufacturer using a trials engine and suspension mated to an enduro style chassis. Brilliant performer off road, but trials inspired gearing limits road use. Top-notch components make this a real steal. *Verdict: What are you waiting for?*

### GILERA

Now defunct part of the Piaggio group with legendary road-racing history.

**50/125:** a/c, 2-str, single. Learner bikes - not officially imported.

**RC 600:** w/c, 4str, 558cc, single, e/s. Nice-looking P-D styled trailie with unimpeachable Paris-Dakar winning pedigree. Shares engine with Northwest. Quite a few still for sale brand new from selected Italian specialists. Good value at approx £3500. Watch out for fragile plastic.

**Northwest:** 140kg/308lbs, w/c, 4-str, 558cc, single, e/s. Supermoto version of the RC 600 with 17 inch cast alloy wheels, USD forks, and serious brakes. Superb 'street scrambler' with drop-dead looks, but not as powerful as the Pegaso or F650, and engine can be vibey. Still a few new ones around. *Verdict: Wonderful style.*

**XRT600:** w/c, 4str, 558cc, single, e/s. Clumsily styled, Paris-Dakar influenced big trailie that uses the stock Gilera lump in yet another manifestation. Big, heavyish and extremely rare in the UK. *Verdict: Ugly duckling.*

### HARLEY DAVIDSON

Not the V-twins, but a mish-mash of European-

made stuff with the H-D badge.

**H-D 90:** a/c, 2-str, 90cc, single. Aermacchi-made 1970s mini-trail funbike. Very rare these days. passable off road. CCM sold the rights to the Armstrong army bikes to H-D circa 1992, and H-D duly won the British army contract. Now electric start (after heavy squaddie casualties with the old left-side kick-starts) and reportedly more robust but down-sized from 500 to 350cc.

### HONDA

**XL** = a/c, 4-str, trail.

**XR** = a/c, 4-str, enduro.

**MTX** = a & w/c, 2-str, trail.

Basic beginners' bikes: XL100S, XL125S, XL185S. 1970s-80s. All use basically the same sohc air-cooled engine in twin-shock chassis (but with different gearboxes). Great bread-and-butter trail bikes, but getting a little long in the tooth nowadays. As with all small Hondas, frequent oil changes are the key to a long, trouble-free life.

**Cub 90:** Whacky off-road 'scooter' for whacky off road riders, different, but lacking any lights or credibility! *Verdict: For planet-e.*

**MT50:** a/c, 2-str, single. Many a 16 year-old's first bike. Unburstable moped-legal trail bike. Staple fare for trail parks. *Verdict: Fun in a small package.*

**MTX 125:** 227lb/103kg, w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Learner-legal monoshock trail bike with an unfortunate propensity for brewing up in serious off-roadery. No longer imported. Definitely not as robust as the XLs.

**MTX200:** w/c, 2-str, 198cc, single. Bigger brother of 125, but never quite lived up to expectations. Quite rare and prone to boiling up - no cooling fan. Be very careful replacing ceramic seal on the water pump. Questionable reliability especially with old ones. *Verdict: Good for making tea.*

**CRM250R:** 114kg, w/c, 2-str, 249cc, single.



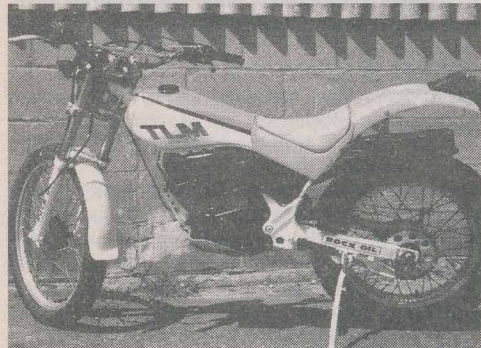
## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

Japanese-spec trail bike roughly based on CR motocrosser but with usual trailie luxuries. Low seat height, reasonable spread of power, superb suspension. Later ones (after 1990) had USD forks. *Verdict: Best of the stroker trail bikes.*

**CL250S:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Bit of an oddity sold to farmers in the early Eighties, for on and off road work. Unusual in that it featured a 5-speed gearbox with a range of both high and low options. More roadified than most trailies with low saddle and front mudguard, and chromed (twin) shocks. boxy styling and front and rear drum brakes makes it rare but not highly desirable. *Verdict: Conversation stopper only.*

**TLR200:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 199cc, single. Early Eighties trials-styled trailie ideal for really snotty green lanes and long distance trials events, but not as comfy as some trail bikes and not really built for speed. Still available new as personal imports at fairly attractive prices.

**TLM200:** a/c, 2-str, 199cc, single. More modern version of above with 2-stroke engine and monoshock suspension built for Japanese home market. Not much of a seat but you can't have it all. *Verdict: Nothing will stop you.*



**XL100:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 99cc, single, 6-speed. very basic, cheap to insure learner trailie. Later versions were smaller all round with more basic instruments. *Verdict: Good starter machine.*

**XL125:** 231lbs, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 123cc, single, 6-speed. Basic, twin-shock learner bike used by legends of beginners in the 70s & 80s. Usually badly treated, unusually they still survive.

**XL125R:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 123cc, single, 6-speed. Monoshock version of above, analagous to 250R and 500R. Later, Italian-built monoshock Dakar version with big tank and electric start can be found as grey import.

**XL185:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 185cc, single, 5-speed. One of the definitive original green laners. Twin shock version only, but can be upgraded with

later 125R parts, including chassis!

**XL250:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Started life way back in the 1970s with the Motorsport, a basic twin-shock trail bike not unlike Yam's XT500. *Verdict: Capable plodder.*

**XL250S:** 1978-on, 261lbs, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 248cc, single. Which sported a four-valve, twin-port head pumping out all of 26bhp, but still with 6-volt electrics at first; twin shocks and crappy SLS front and rear brakes and an unusual 23 inch front wheel, giving little tyre choice. Later versions adopted the Honda Pro-Link rear end and 12-volt electrics. Good all rounder, but better on the road than off it. Comfy saddle and decent build quality make this a good second-hand buy if you can find one. Because this was the bike from which the legendary RS250 despatcher's tool was derived it means you can bolt the complete 12-volt RS250 flywheel, generator and engine cover straight on to any of the 6-volt XL or XR 250s and 500s. The accelerator-pumped carb of the RS will also give a useful power increase to the 250.

**XL250 Degree:** 119kg, w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, 249cc, 25bhp, single. Nineties style version of the venerable no-frills XL250, now water-cooled and with a four valve head, but still with rear drum brake. *Verdict: Nice little stylish trailie.*



**XL500S:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Practically identical to the XL250 apart from the bigger cylinder and head and a longer frame although it is possible to squeeze the bigger engine into a 250 chassis. Only 32bhp, but loads more stomp and the same crappy front brake - green racing linings help a bit, but beware low-speed lock-ups! Fortunately the 23 inch wheels can be re-laced with 21 inch rims which actually improves the handling and provides a vast increase in tyre choice! Beware starting problems and low revs misfire caused by furring of the alloy earthing plate - solution is to take a

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

lead direct from engine to coil.

**XL250R/500R:** 1984-on, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. The cylinder heads were now blessed with Radial Four Valve Combustion (RFVC), vastly superior Pro-Link mono-shock suspension, beefier forks and much better TLS front brake in a 21 inch wheel, and 12-volt electrics - a much better bet all round than the 'S' models if you can afford them. Only snag with the TLS front brake is that it will not stop you from rolling back on a hill! The CR motocrosser front end will fit straight into the XL headstock so long as you use the whole assembly. Beware top end seepage of oil between head and barrel. The XL250R finally lost its metal tank and was developed into the XR version. Early XL500 engines were very popular in single cylinder road racing, so second hand spares are hard to come by. Frequent oil changes are essential to avoid the dreaded knackered head syndrome caused by the camshaft running direct in it although bearing conversions are available. Some 250s suffered from dodgy gearboxes and frequent top end problems. *Verdict: Cheaper than an XR.*

**XL350/400:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Grey import originally built for French and Japanese markets - a big-bore version of the 250 rather than a sleeved down 500. *Verdict: Very rare.*

**XL600R** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Larger version of 500R later swapped its drum front brake for a disc.

**XL600LM:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Paris-Dakar version of above with big tank, flashy twin headlights, red painted engine, tubeless gold spoked rims and glory-be, electric start. Unfortunately it didn't go as well as it looked - one of the magazines put one on a dyno at the time and got only 26bhp at the rear wheel. *Verdict: Nicely individual.*

**Honda XRs:** Most not officially designed for road use (except for the XR-Ls), but virtually all have been registered for the road by owners, with varying degrees of legality.

**XR75/80:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small wheel mini-bike with poky engine for teenagers, but we know of at least one street-legalised one used as a fun green-laner after modification with big wheels.

**XR100:** 68kg, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 99cc, single, 6-speed. Mini off roader based on XL100 engine but with 19 inch front and 16 inch rear wheels. Great, fun bike on which to learn basics. World champion road racer Kenny Roberts uses them to teach sliding techniques to GP hopefuls.

**XR200R:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, single, 5-speed. Early

twin shock bikes (originally based on the XL185) made brilliant green laners. Still fairly popular though later monoshock versions are better and more plentiful. Drum bakes let it down though some late Japanese spec models come with discs. Light enough to pick up if need be. *Verdict: Still a great trail bike.*

**XLR200:** 112kg, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 18bhp, single. Japanese-spec trailbike version of above with drum rear brake.

**XLR250R:** 113kg, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 249cc, 28bhp, single. Japanese-spec trailbike version of above with drum rear brake.

**XLR250-Baja:** 116kg, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 249cc, 28bhp, single. Japanese-spec trailbike version of the XR Baja, but with slightly lower spec and a pair of smaller headlights.



**XR250(R):** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Based on both XL250S and 250R with identical frames but more suspension travel, disc front brake and slightly hotter cam giving small power increase. Early monoshock with twin carbs could be a sod to start when hot - go for the later single-carb model. The XR250 makes a very good off-road all-rounder - light weight and adequate power (30bhp claimed) makes it perfect for trail riders and clubman enduro riders alike, and tolerable on the road. All Honda 250s need to be revved hard if you want to get a move on. New ones come with electric start and there's now a Baja version available with huge twin headlamps, among other detail changes. *Verdict: Popular and versatile trailie.*

**XR250L:** 113kg, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 249cc, 28bhp, single. Grey import with road-legal lights, speedo and indicators. Slightly heavier than R.

**XR350:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Mid Eighties (monoshock) version, only imported for a very short time and now rare in UK. Much the same as the 250 but with extra poke and unfor-

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

tunately extra weight.

**XR500:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. bigger version of XR250, as used by Eddie Kidd for wheelies. Early version was developed into the XR550RR on which Cyril Neveu won the 1982 Paris-Dakar rally.

**XR600:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Several versions since 1984, mostly imported from USA until Honda UK started importing in 1994. Early versions easy to tell by drum rear brake and twin carbs. All are great off roaders, with pukka suspension and lightweight chassis. Not much fun on the road because of the vibes, lack of creature comforts, and twitchy handling. And some can be real pigs to start. Often the bike of choice for overlanders but beware, rear sub-frame is not built to take a lot of weight. Honda UK have not homologated the latest continental-spec version even though it comes with proper speedo and head and tail lights (but no indicators) so they're still not officially road legal and sold by Honda dealers 'for off-road use only' - but it's easy to road-register as an individual so can still be ridden away from the shop. Great wheelie-pulling ability, and very light compared to something like an XT600. Has become the privateer's desert rally bike by which all others are judged - light, relatively simple and very robust. The best noise/power compromise is to keep the main body of the original baffle, but take out the inner core - this looks and sounds 'kosher' but liberates most of the power. Official HRC hop-up kits with big bore (630cc) and hot cam are available but not recommended for off-road use or long-distance reliability. Tons of other tuning parts available. *Verdict: Definitive 'pukka' big banger.*

**XR650L:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 644cc, single, e/s. Grey imported, fully street legal version of the XR600 using electric start Dominator engine and some of the roadgoing niceties. Slight weight penalty, but a real beauty if you can find one. Balancer shaft makes this a much nicer animal on the road, and not much worse off it. *Verdict: Worth searching out.*

**NX125:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 123cc, single, 6-speed. Mini-mini Dominator for continental learner market, based on the XL125 motor. Popular commuter in France, not seen much over here.

**NX250/350:** w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single, e/s. Mini-Dominator, much smaller and lighter than big brother and surprisingly quick (85mph) thanks to a relatively highly tuned water-cooled engine. Ideal for the vertically challenged and for doubling up as an economical commuter. 350cc (Sahara) version built in Brazil for South American market.

**AX1:** w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single, e/s. Japanese home market version of the NX250, built for the street only, with cast wheels and twin tail lights.

**NX650P Dominator:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 644cc, single, e/s. The definitive civilised big-single four-stroke trail bike, with genuine off road ability. Torquey 44bhp motor with handy electric start - early versions had kick-start as well. Classy cosmetics make crashing expensive and despite the mini-fairing still much more tiring than something like a Transalp on M-ways. Nevertheless a good touring bike providing you don't want to go too fast. Watch out for rotted wheel rims on early models. Plentiful in UK but high build quality means secondhand prices are quite steep.

**XLV400VP Transalp:** 183kg, w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 398cc, 37bhp, V-twin, e/s. Japanese-spec version of below.

**XLV600VP Transalp:** w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 583cc, V-twin, e/s. Called the Rally Tourer, its name befits its abilities perfectly. True dual purpose machine, great all-rounder. Engine based on the VT500, and larger versions now power the Bros and Africa Twin. Unburstable and torquey motor churns out a claimed 55bhp but can be tricky to work on unless out of the frame. Expensive cosmetics worth protecting if you're going to venture off road. Early versions easy to spot due to hub rear brake which was prone to going oval. Suffers from rotting wheel rims (like Dominator) in certain cases, and single front discs (identical to CBR600s) can wear fast. Slight facelift in 1993 improved fairing protection slightly. Later versions also come with handy centre stand which was an option on earlier models. Beware handlebar rubber-mountings wearing out giving 'twisted' and remote feel to bars. Sensible secondhand prices. *Verdict: Superb trail bike for touring on.*

**XLV750:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, V-twin. Mid-80s precursor to Transalp but featuring shaft-drive, and distinctive red engine. Never officially imported into UK, but quite common in France.

**XRV650 Africa Twin:** w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, V-twin, e/s. Even closer to HRC P-D specials, mass-produced monster trailie that was extremely popular in Europe in 1989. About 100 were specially built for HRC-supported mass entries to Paris Dakar.

**XR750 Africa Twin:** w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 742cc, V-twin, e/s. Bored out from 650cc to 742cc in 1990 to make an impressive but rather top-heavy Paris-Dakar styled mega-trailie. Much more expensive than the competition at the time, though they had high build

quality and came with trick on-board computer. Better off road than you'd imagine, especially on fast and dusty trails.

**XR750-S Africa Twin:** w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 742cc, V-twin, e/s. Lightened, lowered and improved 1993-on version of its forbear. Superb, top quality all-rounder but still relatively expensive.

### HUSABERG

KTM owned Swedish range of mainly competition four-stroke machines which use what is basically a two-stroke bottom end mated to a four-stroke barrel and head. Light, powerful and can be vibey.

**FE350:** w/c, 4-str, 349cc, single, e/s. Cross between a balls out enduro mount and a trail bike. Beautifully made, fast and light. Left hand kickstart negated by new electric boot. *Verdict: A serious tool.*

**FE501:** w/c, 4-str, 501cc, single, e/s. As above but more so.

**FE600:** w/c, 4-str, 595cc, single, e/s. As above but even more so.

### HUSQVARNA

Previously Swedish, but now Italian-owned company (Cagiva) manufacturing a range of (essentially) competition bikes (Enduro and Motocross), not to mention a rather nice line in lawnmowers. Both two and four stroke machines are renowned for their power to weight ratio and high quality components, though left hand kickstarts can be awkward.

**WRE125:** w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Modern, superb, high specification trailie with powerful revvy motor and top-notch suspension. Though classified as a trailbike it makes a better clubman enduro mount than pure green laner thanks to tall seat height, and peaky top-end power delivery.

### JAWA-CZ

**Penta 125:** a/c, 2-str, 123cc, single. 12 bhp learner legal trail bike from the Czech manufacturers - unknown quantity.

### KAWASAKI

KE = a/c, 2-str, trail.

KL = a/c, 4-str, trail.

KLR = w/c, 4-str, trail.

KLX = w/c, 4-str, trail/enduro.

KMX = w/c, 2-str, trail.

KDX = a/c and w/c, 2-str, enduro then trail.

**KE 80/100:** a/c, 2-str, 79/99cc, single. Very basic disc valve learner trailie with drum brakes both ends. Has been around for donkey's years and value will be dropping as new learner laws come in. Ideal second hand bike for the vertically and financially challenged to start trailing with.

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

**KE125/175:** a/c, 2-str, single. Early twin shock, disc valve trailie dating from the Seventies. Popular then, but most will have rotted away by now. Easy to learn on many were used as farm bikes. Later versions styled to resemble KDX. Lengthy production run means Kawasaki must have got it right. *Verdict: Long lived.*

**KMX125:** 216lb/98kg, w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Very able little trail bike powered by reed valve and KIPS power valve engine, which can easily be de-restricted to double power output to a lively 24bhp.

**KMX200:** 1987-92, 221lb/100kg, w/c, 2-str, 191cc, single, 6-speed. Big-bore version of the 125 with a claimed 30bhp, which makes a much more able all-rounder capable of motorway cruising and a top whack of nearly 90mph. Not as reliable as the 125 and if used 'in extremis' off-road the suspension, and especially the forks are not as good as later generation KDXs. Fuel range to bone dry is only 90 miles with 10 mile reserve, and KIPS valve can give trouble, as can clutch and radiator (no fan fitted!). 200 also lumbered with a 17 inch rear wheel, so it's quite common to fit the 18 inch from the 125 to improve off-road tyre choice. KMX also suffered from indifferent build quality, and could be fragile off road. Pads and discs wore out if you so much as looked at them. But seat height is much more accessible for shorties than KDX. Has not been imported for a few years now, if in good nick, an excellent trail bike for most conditions.

**KDX125SR:** w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. 124cc. Similar engine to the KMX (with KIPS power valve) but with the stronger competition-derived 'perimeter', square-tube chassis. Later ones had upside-down forks, but were slower than cheaper KMX in restricted form.

**KDX175/200:** a/c, 2-str, single. originally sold as a competition only machine with no speedo or horn and a plastic tank when they were still illegal on the road. Fine for enduros but a bit uncivilised on the road. Peaky and raucous, the first models were however lighter, lower and torquier than the later w/c models.

**KDX200:** w/c, 2-str, 199cc, single. Based on KDX125, completely redesigned from a/c version with increased suspension travel, revised Uni-Track rear end, and more top end power. Basically a clubman enduro bike, very few haven't been raced.

**KDX220R/SR:** w/c, 2-str, 220cc, single. As above but updated for '95, and with more power and torque. The SR is the street version. *Verdict: Yummy.*

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

**KDX250SR:** w/c, 2-str, 249cc, single. Trail bike version of the KDX with heaps of grunt, perimeter frame and huge USD forks. Tallish and very powerful. Japanese spec only. *Verdict:* Wow.

**KL250:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 246cc, single. Late seventies twin shock trail bike derived from the 200cc road bike commuter. Pretty basic (no balancer shaft), but also pretty reliable, and extremely frugal.

**KLR250:** 1987-on, 260lbs/118kgs, w/c, 4-str, sohc, 249cc, single. Reliable if rather unexciting trail bike with just 23bhp on tap. Despite the complexity of w/c engine they're very robust, and easy to service. More than capable of economical daily commuting, but not very fast on or off the road. Revived as a budget trailie alongside more expensive KLX having been dropped when they first came in. *Verdict:* Excellent starter trailbike with good manners.

**KLX250:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 246cc, single. Enduro version of the early twin shock KL, with less road manners.

**KLX250:** 1994-on, w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, 249cc, single. The four-stroke equivalent of the KDX, with similar motocross-derived perimeter chassis. Looks the business with handling and suspension to match, but performance of the 25bhp street-legal trail version is a bit flat. The lighter 30bhp enduro version is a lot more satisfying to ride, but early ones had carburetion difficulties, and both need to be revved hard to produce their power. Quite tall in the saddle.

**KLX300:** 1996-on, w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Latest bigger-bore version of above with more power and torque and generally improved all round. *Verdict:* Nice.

**KLE500:** 392lb/178kg, w/c, 4-str, 8-valve, dohc, 498cc, parallel twin. Slightly oddly styled 'town trailie' which shares its engine with the EN500/GPZ500 whose motors were in turn, effectively one half of a GPZ900R. The revvy little KLE makes 50bhp but is far less trail-friendly than the torquey Transalp and more tiring on the road especially with its uncomfortable (pink) seat and minimal fairing. Quite fast for the money and pretty good around town, but definitely not going to suit everyone's taste or backside. *Verdict:* Unique.

**KLR600:** 1984-on, 430lbs, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 564cc, single. Big banger trail bike which started out with a kickstart but became the first big trailie to be fitted with an electric boot. Some had balancer chain problems and early ones overheated due to poor siting of the thermostat, but otherwise a fine handling road machine with

plenty of trail-ability. *Verdict:* Sensible thumper.

**KLR 650:** 1987-on, 286lb, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single. Bored out version of the 600. Like the KLR 250, recently re-introduced as a cut-price all-rounder now that insurance rating system no longer unfairly penalises over-600s. *Verdict:* Competent rather than spectacular.

**KLR 650 & (Tengai):** 1989-on, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single. Bored out to 651cc in 1987, Kawasaki have never had any success in the African rallies, but the Tengai (launched in 1989) is their be-fairinged homage to the genre. Simple KLR may be a bit basic by today's standards but it works well enough, and is tough and practical to boot. Plenty of bottom end grunt. Relunched in '95 after a break of two years.

**KLX 650:** 337lbs/153kg, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single. Bigger version of the 250 with the same drop-dead motocross looks, but with USD forks. Early ones were designed without enough clearance between the rear wheel and the mudguard which meant the wheel hammers into the CDI box at max compression with expensive consequences. No bashplate either. Not as torquey as the Dominator or the Pegaso but great for smooth dirt roads or gravel-strewn tarmac. Ideally suited as a supermoto or town bike. Fast and furious, but not much plonkability. Enduro version and later models didn't suffer the same suspension problems. *Verdict:* Good but not good enough.

### KTM

Mainly enduro two and four-strokes of dubious street legality. Older enduro bikes are sometimes trailed, but generally rather fast/peaky/specialised for green lane use.

**400:** w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Trail bike version of an existing enduro bike, but with the added civility of a balancer shaft. Fast and exciting on forest roads, but not much of a chugger. Great on the road though lack of screen may be a problem for some. Tall seat height and left-hand kickstart make it tricky for shorties. Top notch suspension, but not as light as it looks. Also quite pricey. *Verdict:* Specialist tackle.

**620:** w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. As above but more so.

**Duke:** w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Strangely-styled but quite unique Supermoto version of KTM's big-banger. Stylish little headlamp fairing contains two small headlights, and of course the bike rides on 17 inch wheels with wide, sticky rubber. Lots of fun, lots of cred, but expensive and rare since they're only imported in strictly limited numbers. *Verdict:* Street rod.

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

### LAVERDA

**DR650 Atlas:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, twin. Strange overweight trailie produced from the dying embers of the Italian Laverda concern. Using the Montjuic engine as its source the Atlas' only claim to fame is the inexplicable 'Soft Ramble' sticker that graced the swingarm. *Verdict:* Rare with reason.

### MORINI

**Camel:** a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Oddball twin shock, V-twin trailie utilising the heron-headed Morini lump. High saddle and limited spares can be a problem, but otherwise quite robust and great fun if you can master the left-handed kickstart. Not very plentiful, but fairly cheap. *Verdict:* Eccentric transport.

**Kanguro:** a/c, 4-str, ohv, 344cc, V-twin. Looks like an accident between an XT350 and a Transalp. Lovely engine is a bit dated really, but the Kanguro (couldn't they spell Kangaroo?) is definitely worth a look if you're after something a bit different and don't mind the left-hand kickstart. Sold very slowly and remained in production for a number of years, so it's possible to still find new ones, and they're very cheap for an Italian bike. *Verdict:* Strangely alluring.

### MOTO GUZZI

**350TT:** a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Middleweight Guzzoid with all the attraction of chicken pox. *Verdict:* see below.

**V65TT:** a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Middleweight Guzzi trailie of average ability. Hard work on the dirt... and on the road. Not many around. *Verdict:* Masochists only need apply.

**Quota:** a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Big Guzzi that like Triumph's Tiger is really just a road bike in trail bike clothing, but without the Triumph's impressive on road performance. A truly monstrous beast with a seat-height that requires a ladder if you're under 6ft. It makes even the Tiger feel small by comparison. Agricultural engine with torque reaction from the shaft and dangerous lack of ground clearance both on and off road. Good fuel consumption thanks to fuel injection and high gearing, are about all it has going for it. Incredibly expensive when it was launched, but prices did come down. Strictly for straight dirt roads and motorways. Should come with a government health warning. *Verdict:* Proves that big is not necessarily beautiful.

### MZ

Ex-East German manufacturer with a reputation of making stodgy but solid bikes. A few a/c, 2-str, 250 ISDT specials around, though most road MZs are robust enough to be 'trailified'. Cheap and cheerful. *Verdict:* Worth a trip around the

### Bloc.

**500 Saxon Country:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, Rotax-powered single. Old-fashioned looking trail bike, that's really just a roadster with a set of trail clothes on. Expensive for what it is. *Verdict:* Obsolete.

### ROKON

**340RT:** a/c, 2-str, Sachs-engined, 340cc, single. Obscure US bikes using a snowmobile engine with a pull start and an automatic gearbox. Manufactured during the seventies with a twin shock chassis. *Verdict:* Bizarre but wild.

### SUZUKI

TS = a/c then w/c, 2-str, trail.

PE = a/c, 2-str, enduro.

SP = a/c, 4-str, trail.

DR = o-a/c 4-str, trail.

**RV125:** a/c, 2-str, single. Strange looking fun bike from the seventies with small wheels and balloon tyres designed for riding on sand. Looks a bit like a full size monkey bike. Quite fun, but rare and more than a bit odd.

**TS120 Trailcat:** a/c, 2-str, single. One of the first purpose built trail bikes to come into the UK in the early Seventies, with unusual, Land Rover style high and low ratio 3x2 gearbox. Lightweight and easy handling twin shock chassis. A bit of a collector's item if you like that sort of thing. *Verdict:* For anoraks only.

**TS125/185:** a/c, 2-str, single. Early seventies twin shock trailie with distinctive high level pipe which was unusual at the time. Not many left now.

**TS125/185ER:** a/c, 2-str, single. Peakier learner bike from early Eighties still with 'twin shocks' *Verdict:* Not bad considering.

**TS250:** a/c, 2-str, single. Much the same as the early 125 but with punchier 250cc motor, and low-level chrome front mudguard.

**TS250ER:** a/c, 2-str, single. Early Eighties trail bike that's a bigger version of the 125 with twin shocks and electronic ignition.

**TS50:** a/c, 2-str, single. Undistinguished twin shock trailie.

**TS50ER:** a/c, 2-str, single. As above.

**TS50X:** w/c, 2-str, single. Modest trail moped with a roaring 3bhp on tap, and 'full floater' monoshock suspension. Good for a 50 though.

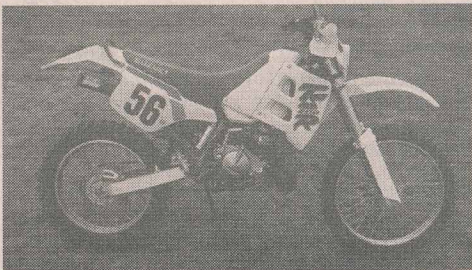
**TS125X:** w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Very competent learner legal trailie. Better than the equivalent DT at the time. *Verdict:* Good secondhand buy.

**TS125R:** w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Latest version of above with power valve fitted that just needs connecting up to get full power.

**TS200R:** 112kg, w/c, 2-str, 195cc, 35bhp, single. Grey import with its own French champi-

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

onship. Higher spec than UK 125s includes USD forks. Excellent stroker trailie that's not too expensive. Reasonable availability for a grey import. *Verdict: Good value trailie.*



**PE175:** a/c, 2-str, single. Basic twin-shock clubman enduro bike from the seventies, styled on the RM motocrosser. Poky at the time, but not by today's standards. Last ones had 'full floater' suspension. Reasonable number of tatty ones still about that can be had for not much money.

**PE250:** a/c, 2-str, single. Similar to 175 but with a better spread of power. Lots of fun, but noisy as hell.

**PE400:** a/c, 2-str, single. As above but with more power than most people could use in this chassis off-road. *Verdict: Wild.*

**SP370:** a/c 4-str, sohc, single. Early eighties twin shock trailie that seemed to go on and on. Frugal, robust and reasonably reliable despite lack of balancer shaft. Good, cheap hack.

**SP400:** a/c 4-str, sohc, single. As above.

**DR125:** o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small and not very powerful trailie but with the benefit of being robust, reliable and frugal. *Verdict: Slow but solid.*

**DR125 Raider:** o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. As above but with false header pipe and (marginally) bigger P-D style tank.

**DR200:** o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. As above but despite bigger motor, still a bit underpowered. Not sold as street legal. Beware rear wheel collapse on early ones.

**DR125/200 Djebel:** o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, sin-



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gle, e/s. Japanese home market version of above with more street mods (including electric boot). Later ones had big single headlamp with surrounding protection bar.

**DR250:** o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Grey import baby brother of the 350 we get here in the UK, only with USD forks and a brilliant ride height control making it more accessible to little people. *Verdict: Worth searching out.*

**DR350:** o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Superb little trailie with dry-sump motor, excellent suspension, but tiny petrol tank. A bit cheap in places, but lightweight and fairly robust. Better off road than on it. Front disc brake not very powerful and wears out rapidly. Can look tatty quite quickly. Unfortunately kick-start only (until 95), and high seat height rules it out for sub six footers. Engine feels unburstable and will rev and rev though some have been known to drop valves occasionally. *Verdict: Great trail bike.*

**DR350(E):** o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Enduro version of above which is slightly 'harder' all round. Available in the UK but very few sold, and no 'leccy start available. *Verdict: Rare but good.*

**DR400S:** 287lbs, a/c 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 396cc, single. Updated SP400 from the mid-Eighties with alloy petrol tank, but still twin shock and 6-volt. Beware camshaft rattles at high mileages. Very economical, but without the benefit of balance shafts. Watchout for things shaking loose like engine bolts or perhaps your leg. *Verdict: Shake, baby shake.*

**DR500S:** o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Foreign market, bigger-bore version of the 400. None known in the UK.

**DR600S:** 136kg/299lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 589cc, single. Classic big banger with modern monoshock rear end and balancer shaft motor. One of the best (and most sensible) of the DRs, but a bit overgeared and heavy. Can be a bugger to start when hot till you get the knack. *Verdict: Good secondhand buy.*

**DR650RSE:** o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 640cc, single, e/s. More road than trail bike, longer, heavier than earlier DRs and with civilised half fairing and twin silencers. Good road bike, but first gear very high for trails and despite half decent suspension, still a bit of a handful on the dirt no thanks to its seat height. Engine sounds like a tractor and vibrates like one. Carbs can give iffy running at low revs. *Verdict: Okay I s'pose.*

**DR650:** o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single, e/s. Latest version of above without the half fairing or twin exhausts. Still overgeared, still rather

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

tall, but with the best suspension in class. Not very refined and feels a bit cheap, but definitely heading in the right direction.

**DR750:** o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. The original 'Dr Big' - Suzuki's first attempt at a Paris-Dakar style big trailie. No-one has built a bigger single - except Suzuki themselves. *Verdict: Not for the faint hearted.*

**DR800:** o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. The ultimate ultimate. Monstrous single with gargantuan tank, massive seat height and weird styling. Could win awards for ugliness, but pretty good handler and surprisingly nimble. Massive tank gives good range. Dropped from the UK range in about 1993, suffered badly from Norwich Union's capacity-based insurance grading, but should be much cheaper to insure now. Many engines found their way into singles racing. But there's a few around if you really must have one. *Verdict: Why bother?*

### TRIUMPH

**Tiger:** w/c, 4-str, 12-valve, dohc, 885cc, triple. Brilliant but expensive road bike from the new Triumph factory, styled to look like an off roader for the German market. Grunty engine makes it quick on the road but don't bother venturing off road, as suspension leaves a lot to be desired. Rear linkage hangs down below frame rails and catches on practically everything. Tall seat height makes low speed manoeuvring tricky. *Verdict: A trailie in name only.*

### YAMAHA

**DT** = a/c & w/c, 2-str, trail.

**IT** = a/c, 2-str, enduro.

**WR** = w/c, 2-str, enduro.

**XT** = a/c, 4-str, trail.

**TT** = a/c, 4-str, enduro.

**TW** = a/c, 4-str, trail/fun.

**BW** = a/c, 4-str, trail/fun.

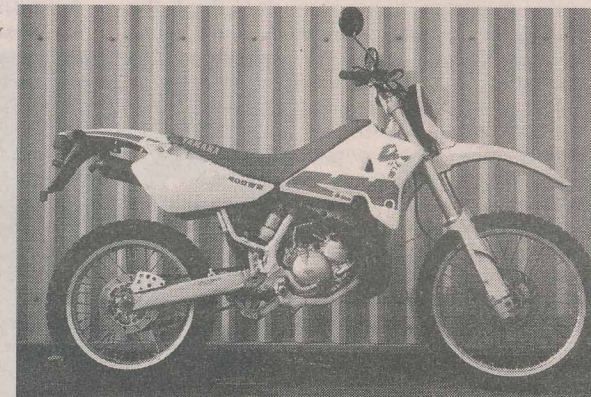
**DT125/175:** a/c, 2-str, single. The DTs are the bike that brought trail riding to the masses! Started out as a basic twin shock trail bike back in the late Seventies before adopting cantilever rear ends. They built up a reputation for being an extremely competent trail tool and taking an amazing amount of punishment. The 175s were dropped when the 125 learner laws came along in 1981. *Verdict: Still one of the best trailbikes ever.*

**DT125(LC):** 1987-on, w/c, 2-str, single. The DT came of age with the adoption of watercooling, motocross styling, and most important of all, a power valve. Lost some of its torque but gained a revvier motor and lots more top end

together with sophisticated suspension front and rear. In 12bhp restricted form they're as flat as a pancake, but unrestricted make a capable 24bhp. Although in the fashion stakes they've been overtaken by trickier looking tackle, they still top the sales chart because of their hard earned reputation. still good at off roading though they're taller and peakier than ever. Stripped down and tuned up they will pass as a good clubman enduro mount. *Verdict: The king lives on.*

**DT200(R):** w/c, 2-str, single. Grey import big bore version of the 125. Extra oomph makes it easier to ride. *Verdict: Competent all rounder.*

**DT200(WR):** w/c, 2-str, single. Japanese-spec trail bike version of the WR enduro bike. Visually almost identical, but with usual trail bike refinements.



**DT250:** a/c, 2-str, single. Both early and late Seventies, twin shock and cantilever shocked version of the smaller bikes, more power but less agility. *Verdict: The first Jap trailie.*

**DT400:** a/c, 2-str, single. Hairy chested version of above, not many left now.

**IT125/175/200:** a/c, 2-str, single. Early eighties enduro tool. Useful off road, but a bit hairy on it no thanks to drum brakes. Use of premix is a bit of a pain, 175 is the better bet if you can find one.

**IT250:** a/c, 2-str, 246cc, single. Less peaky, bigger bore version of above with enough power for any off road activity. At the time it boasted more power and much less weight than the equivalent watercooled RD250LC twin!

**IT425/465/490:** a/c, 2-str, single. Fire-breathing, hard to tame, monster stroker for serious enduro freaks. Only for those with lots of skill or very large gonads. Not the most reliable bike in the world. *Verdict: Melts visors at 50 paces.*



## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

**WR200:** w/c, 2-str, single. Brilliant clubman enduro bike with lightweight chassis and 'soft-tune' engine, but plenty of power. Rear suspension oversprung, and they need gearing down for low speed trails. Good if you like your bikes tall. Easy to ride with a nice light front end. *Verdict: Modern classic.*

**WR250:** w/c, 2-str, single. As above but with 'hard-tune' engine. Essentially the enduro version of the YZ motocrosser but with wider ratio gearbox and more flywheel. It also came with a lighting coil, but no lights! *Verdict: Peaky and poky.*

**WR500:** a/c, 2-str, single. As above but using air-cooled YZ motor.

**TDR 250:** w/c, 2-str, parallel twin. A TZR250 in trail clothing. Great road bike with demon brakes thanks to dinner-plate sized front disc, and all or nothing powerband. Peaky motor makes it difficult to use off road apart from on fast fire roads, supermotard or competition road rallies for which it is ideal. A thoroughly uncivilised motorcycle - raucous, peaky and excruciatingly uncomfortable with an unquenchable thirst for fuel - and absolutely fabulous. Beware seizures on left hand cylinder, and high speed wobbles on the road. Has a few passionate and delinquent supporters. *Verdict: For petrolheads everywhere.*

**XT125:** a/c, 4-str, single.

Learner legal motorcycle without the need for restriction! *Verdict: Reliable but intensely boring.*

**XT225 Serow:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small but perfectly formed grey import trail bike with kick and e/s versions, but sadly not both together, although retro-fit kick is possible. Light, manoeuvrable, and easy to ride. Brilliant attention to detail such as mini indicators and sensibly placed grab handles marks this out as a superb green laner. Small engine needs to be worked hard especially on the road to get decent performance, but its a small price to pay for such a good bike. Reasonable numbers brought in so far. *Verdict: Makes sense.*

**XT250:** 248lbs, a/c, 4-str, 249cc, sohc, single. Early Eighties Cantilever shock trailie of some note. Light and strong with balancer shaft engine, they can still be found for not much money and make an excellent secondhand buy

if in good condition though occasional early ones suffered valve problems. Nice and low though not very fast. *Verdict: Good all-rounder.*  
**XT250T(R):** 113kg, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, 249cc, 27bhp, single. Foreign market mini XT350 with all the benefits but slightly lighter. *Verdict: Rare.*

**TT250-R:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, 249cc, 30bhp, single, e/s. Modern lightweight trailie/enduro that is Yamaha's version of the Honda XR250. Revvy motor and a reasonable spread of power, but rather expensive. Unusual electronic dials, and other neat touches. Now officially imported.

**TT250-R RAID:** 121kg, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, 249cc, 30bhp, single, e/s. As above but with large, single, (Baja-style) headlamp and protective guard, bigger tank and slightly different styling. *Verdict: Appealing.*



**XT350:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Plain Jane trailie that's better than it looks. Early versions boasted 31bhp, but later ones emasculated to 17bhp due to noise regs. Chassis and suspension a bit limited but nevertheless still pretty competent. Plenty of bottom end, not too tall in the saddle, and excellent economy (80mpg possible if you try hard). Long production run means it must be good, but demand for second-hand ones ensures prices stay fairly high. *Verdict: Carry-on trailing.*

**TT350:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Grey import enduro version of above, with improved suspension, more power, and more basic instrumentation and lighting. Not that scarce considering, they make a nice trailie with similar reliability to the XTs. *Verdict: Nice one.*

**XT500:** 304lbs, a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. The original big banger trailie that started it all.

## TRAILBIKE GUIDE

Produced for years and years, even when superseded by later versions. Twin shock, 6-volt, character building bike that could often get into more trouble than it could get out of. All sorts of special parts were produced for it for the would be overlander over the years. Vibrates like a jack hammer, and very basic by modern standards but the lack of sophistication is part of its charm, and the low seat height makes it much easier to 'paddle' than some of its more monstrous successors. Can be horribly unreliable and a pig to start, but its easy to work on and plenty still around. Classic buffs have inflated the prices, but don't pay over the odds. *Verdict: Your dad would love it.*

**TT500:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. More serious off roader version of the above. Much lighter and with a punchier motor, but still with 6-volt electrics. *Verdict: Rare.*

**XT550:** 1982-on, 292lbs, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 558cc, single. Updated version of above with 4-valve engine, twin carbs and cantilever rear end. Smoother than 500 but hard to get excited about, and some had gearbox problems. Not many around now. *Verdict: Not as good as the original.*

**XT600 Tenere:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Superb Paris-Dakar inspired big trailie with unburstable engine, supple suspension, mammoth tank and comfy saddle. Loved by overlanders the world over. Huge touring range, and clever attention to detail (for instance air filter positioned under tank to avoid being clogged by sand and dust). Later versions inherited a full fairing but lost some of the attention to detail. Feels like riding a great big cosy armchair, and regardless of Yamaha's claims to the contrary seems to have more power than later 'cooking' versions. Real off road ability in most hands. *Verdict: Best of the big Yams.*

**XT600E:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. No frills version of the much loved XT. Heavier and more sluggish than the original thanks to steel rims and generally lower spec. Unsophisticated especially in the suspension department, but thoroughly crashable and a respectable plodder. Heaps of grunt. Updated in 95 with more modern looks. *Verdict: Not as good as the original.*

**TT600:** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Grey import enduro version of above, with improved suspension, more power, more basic instrumentation and lighting, and plastic tank. A few around, they make a more suitable serious trail bike than an XT. *Verdict: worth looking out for.*

**TT600 (updated):** a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Latest version of the above now available

with an electric start. Much more modern styling includes USD forks, still only available as a grey import.

**XTZ660:** w/c, 4-str, 5-valve, dohc, single. Another attempt at making a long-distance overland/road version of the venerable XT. Heavier, with less range and not much more power than the original. Less crashworthy than the first and the taller saddle may put some off. Nevertheless it's had a lot of success in desert racing form and with some mods is eminently trailable. *Verdict: Another good Yam.*

**XTZ750 Super Tenere:** w/c, 4-str, 10-valve, dohc, parallel twin. Yamaha's answer to the Africa Twin. Cheaper build quality makes it a good value, comfortable all-rounder on the road with plenty of touring potential and 200 mile tank range. Engine is strong but lacks a little bit of bottom end, and gearbox is atrocious to use. Genuinely fast and not too bad off road especially in the dry, but the standard exhaust is rather wide (catching on ruts). Decent suspension, but a bit bouncy on the road. *Verdict: A good try.*

**TDM850:** w/c, 4-str, 10-valve, dohc, parallel twin. 'New sports' road bike with trail styling developed from the XTZ750 but with much grunter 850cc lump. Lower seat height, much torquier engine and better brakes and handling. Early versions had appallingly clunky gearbox and exhaust collector box rules out an aftermarket centre stand. Not really a trail bike unless it's high summer nice and dry and the trail is easy. Soft suspension limits speed off road. *Verdict: Brilliant trail influenced roadie.*

**TW200:** a/c, 4-str, 18bhp, single, e/s. Fattish-wheeled fun bike which makes a brilliant and economical (though odd-looking) trail bike for the short of leg, with both electric start and kick. Surprisingly good on the road, and makes a competent commuter (70+mpg possible), but let down by lousy SLS front drum brake and needs an extra gear. Suspension a bit basic and tyres can be expensive. Gearbox sprocket a special part due to outrigger bearing. Will embarrass pukka trail bikes in the right hands. *Verdict: Strangely attractive.*

**BW200:** a/c, 4-str, single, e/s. True beach balloon-tired version of above but not street legal. Not recommended for anything other than sand. *Verdict: Sand sled.*

**BW350:** a/c, 4-str, single, e/s. Hairy-arsed version of above. *Verdict: Get out the bull worker.*

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**Yamaha** WR200 enduro, 1993, T&T, MXA seat, many extras fitted, green lane use only, with spares, good cond, £1600. Tel Bristol 0117 9426824

**Honda** XL600R Paris Dakar, 1984, MOT, 26000km, big tank, great bike, two new Avon Gripsters, Dynojet, £1600 ono. Tel 01306 712859 (eve), 01306 742353 (day),

**Kawasaki** KDX175, 1981, air cooled, MOT, enduro tyres, very tidy bike, too raucous for me, might swop trials or trail or sell £550 ono. Tel 01403 782723 (West Sussex)

**Yamaha** XT350, F-reg, clean original cond, 16000 miles, long MOT, white & red, road use only, first to see will buy, £1295. Tel 01233 624576 (Kent)

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**Honda CG125**, A-reg, not used for 6 months, exchange for trials moped, my CBT expired, help. Tel 01244 545412

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## SPARES

**Yamaha DT175MX** new cylinder barrel and piston £65, alloy silencer £10, two sets brake shoes £5. Tel 01722 323141 (Salisbury)

**Motocross** helmet, CTS C5, kevlar mix, size medium, cost £100 new, never worn, still boxed with receipt, unwanted gift, £65 ovno. Tel 01455 230608 (Hinckley)

**Honda XL185** crankshaft, good condition £25, Honda CR250 radiators (1987), £12, Yamaha XT600 petrol tank, vgc £50, Yamaha DT50M cylinder and brand new piston kit, £25. Tel 01225 862923 (Wilts)

**KLR600/650** spares, wheels, forks, s/arm, frame, seat, calipers, discs, yokes, many other bits but no plastics. Tel 01226 245814 (Barnsley), ask for Barton

1981 Suzuki PE175 rolling chassis £50, Yamaha XT550 forks and front wheel, £40. Tel 01299 270493 (Cleobury)

**3 bike** trailer, home built, strong, stable, no rust, red, £100 ono. Tel 01524 413300  
**Trailer**, 2-bike, fully galvanised with T-bar suspension & lighting, 50mm ball, official KTM factory supply, made in Slovenia, £410, Call 01825 791186

**The** dreaded muffs - actually quite good, heavy duty black nylon with fleecy inners (ooer), easy to fit, and I'm sure the Mrs could make wax cotton covers if you really want the authentic look, as new £15 plus postage, plus DT125R bits, pair of forks, complete front wheel, brake disc, caliper, speedo, headlamp (white painted black), set clocks, 2 cylinder heads, 2 good pozilube pumps, rear rim, phone for (fair) prices. Tel 01756 752169

**Gold** alloy rim - 21" rim bought in error, 32, yes 32 holes, £25 plus post, vgc. Tel 01756 752169

**Knobbly** tyres for sale, front and back, sizes 250-17 and 350-16, good cond, £30 for the pair. Tel 01582 612681 after 5pm  
**Size 9** Styl Martin MX boots, Kevlar reinforced, £50. Tel 01782 315087 (Stoke)  
**Various** motorcycle mags etc, stamp for list to D Smith, 15 Church Road, Cantley, Norwich, Norfolk, NR13 3SN

**Honda** workshop manual for CB250RS and CL250S, cost over £40, sell for £25 plus postage. Tel 01274 541384, Tony after 6pm  
**DT250MX** forks wheels and hubs, airbox and filter, carburettor 28 & 34mm, Norton 16H engine reconditioned. Tel 01635 31047 David

**Magazines**, British Dirt Bike Rider, American Motocross Actio, Dirt Bike and Dirt Rider, every copy from 1995 except January, cost £90 to buy, pristine condition, sell for £20. Tel 0191 422 2324

## WANTED

**Wanted** Honda XR200 late model mono & discs, state price and condition. C Brett, The cottage, Ashley Lane, Moulton, Northampton

**Wanted** DR-GN 400 cdi unit. Tel 01229 462130

**Wanted** Super Tenere XTZ750, any year considered, cash for the right bike, also touring racks and camping gear wanted. Tel 0171 328 8846 Steve

**Wanted** engine for Yamaha XT350, would consider XT600 or something that fits. Tel 0171 379 7077 or 0181 947 5841 Andy  
**Wanted** XR250 30mm Keihin carburettor, must be cheap and in good cond. Tel 01225 862923 (Wilts)

**Wanted** enduro or MX bike, preferably non runner or without engine, have RD200 (non runner) but complete to swap or can pay cash if cheap. Chris Baker, 93 Pullman

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Drive, Salisbury, Wilts SP2 9DN

**Wanted** Yamaha DT250MX airbox. Tel 0121 745 1235 (Birmingham)

**Wanted** s/h MX boots size 9, red black or possibly white, must be in good nick, will pay postage, call Tim on 0151 677 6185 (Merseyside)

**Wanted** Magazines, Which Bike No 28, 30, 44, 46, 48, also Which Bike 'On the Rough' - special, please contact 01779 473046 after 6pm (Grampian)

**Wanted** young ladies familiar with Swedish riding techniques (including advanced mud work), must ride in oilskin-only oilskin, and be willing to accommodate interesting pillion position, no charge made for successful blonde or brunette applicants, gingers need not apply, the larger the better please, phone Simon Villarrubia 01756 753519

**Wanted** Honda XL250, 1972 onwards, all new or used parts wanted for cash, complete bikes, runners or non runners wanted any condition, if out please leave message. Tel 01277 631742

**Wanted** workshop manual for Yamaha Super Tenere XTZ750, good price paid, ring Tony on 01274 541384 after 6pm

**Wanted** Honda XL250S or XL500S must be in mint original condition or near to original with low mileage and MOT, would like a rack on it, cash waiting. Tel 01686 626925 evenings

**Wanted** spares for Suzuki TS250X, especially wheels. Tel 01737 224279, (Surrey)

**Wanted** 80 to 150cc trail or off road bike, must run well and be in good condition, will pay up to £300, but has to be local. Tel 01902 744071 (Wolverhampton)

**Wanted** trail bike, condition doesn't mat-

ter but must go and be rideable at good price. Must have kick start, phone Stephen on 01572 812079 after 5pm (Leics)

**Wanted** Acerbis 45 litre petrol tank for BMW R100GS, must be in excell cond, cash waiting, will collect, contact Simon on 0175 6010359 (Hants)

**Wanted** XR200 carb, any year, must be good, will fetch anywhere, top price paid, also any engine parts for XR200, XL185s, XL125s and XL125R. Tel 0121 430 3335

**Wanted** Acerbis tank complete with fitting for DR350. Tel 01705 377900

**Wanted** KTM 500 Rotax engine rear wheel (small drum) and engine gasket set, also RM250 twin shock in bits. Tel 01562 827907

**Wanted** Pre-65 Triumph Tiger Cub, preferably in trial spec, but any considered. Tel 01202 547 286 (Bournemouth)

**Wanted** early 80s Cagiva WMX/RX125 enduro/MX bikes or bits, large tank for Yamaha XT550, and info on big bore kits for Honda XL250S, also carb for Honda CB250RSA. Tel 01299 270493

**Wanted** for DR350SE Suzuki plastic petrol tank - standard size (2 gallons), stainless steel or alloy rear exhaust box, Clymer manual. Tel 01494 713242 anytime (Bucks)

**Wanted** big tank to fit Honda XL500R and any other cosmetic or performance parts available, may consider p/x up to XL600 or Tenere or DR600 or any other. Tel Steve 01685 841446

**Wanted** RM125 1978 Cmodel rear brake lever (operates cable) and manual for same or for year thereabout. Phone Tom on 0131 664 4717 (Edinburgh)

**Wanted** DR350R (enduro version), please telephone 01403 266124

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# TRAIL TALES...

PAUL BLEZARD: PARTY ANIMAL AND ENDUROIST COMBINES HIS PASTIMES

**I**t seemed like such a good idea at the time; party in the evening in the Forest of Dean, enduro in the morning in the Brecon Beacons. What better way to spend a weekend? Better still, I had a lift all the way from London to the party in a van, all I had to do was ride the XR600 from the Forest of Dean, through Bwlch and to the start near the Talybont reservoir first thing on the Sunday morning. No problem.

By the time we got to the picturesque party venue in the wilds of Gloucestershire early on the Saturday evening the temperature had plummeted and I waved my friends a cheery goodbye saying 'See you at the start at 8am to change the tyres' (as usual the bike was totally unprepared for the event).

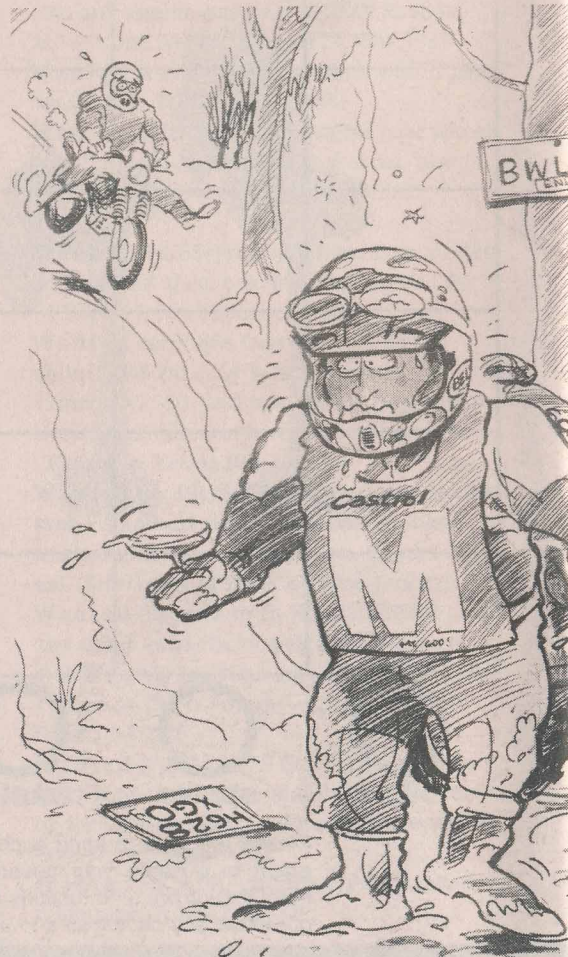
Soon I got down to some serious partying - I was careful to drink nothing but expensive champagne, and tucked heartily into the buffet of salmon steak, prawn vol-au-vents and mature cheeses. It was a great evening, with live music, energetic dancing and vigorous chatting up of a variety of apparently unattached women - in particular one blonde who gave me her telephone number and suggested I call her the following week.

Next morning I awoke with a start and looked at my watch: 8am. God, I was supposed to be 40 miles away changing tyres already. I felt absolutely terrible and it was 9.30 by the time I'd got myself together enough to set off for the enduro.

I finally made it to the start at about 10.30, long after the last man had got away. The organiser took pity on me and in response to my request for a gentle bumble round, said I could be a travelling

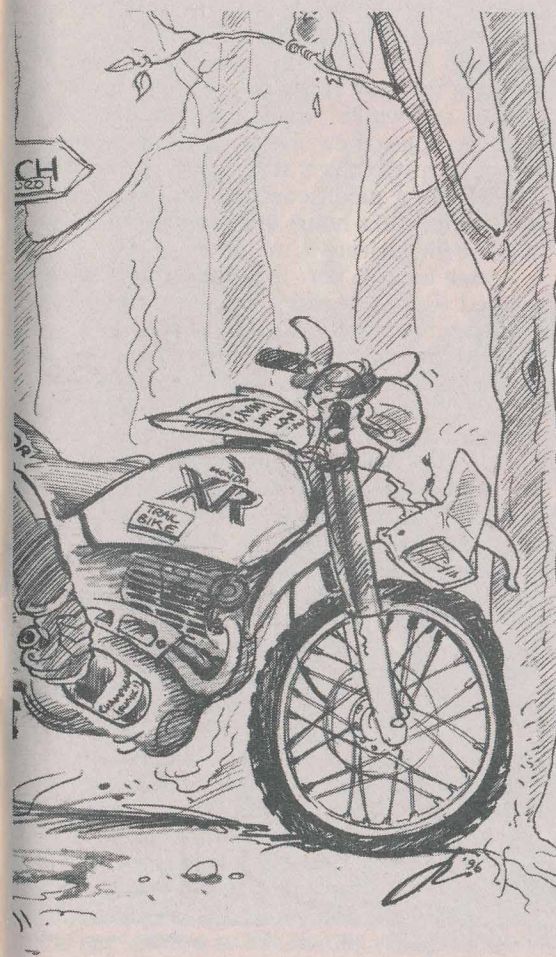
marshal if I put on a bib and helped out as I went along. I didn't like to tell him that I would probably be needing more help than anyone else that day.

All thoughts of changing tyres had long since gone of course so I was left with the worn out trail tyre on the front wheel and a half used trials tyre on the back but I had more pressing concerns as the bile in my stomach finally made a break for freedom. As I contemplated the multi-coloured mess at my feet I was sure I could make out the remains of



the veggie burger I'd eaten at the motorway service station on the M4 the day before. Mmmm, lovely.

Feeling slightly better I managed to negotiate an extremely steep descent over loose logs without coming to grief. Then there was a seriously rocky climb up a stream, with the added hazard of mountain bikers coming down against the direction of the enduro. Finally the course emerged right on top of the mountain, but I wasn't really in any mood to enjoy the stupendous views. There was still plenty of ice up there and I could understand why people going quickly would have come to grief. Needless to say, I took it very steady.



Coming down off the mountain was one of the steepest sustained descents I have ever ridden, but I managed to stay shiny side up until I was just yards from terra firma. Crossing a ditch I got it all wrong and went straight over the handlebars into the mud, losing half my headlight in the process.

I helped to justify my marshal's bib by aiding a stranded DR350 rider before proceeding into the forest stopping at the point where the route turned sharp left down a precipitous drop. The God of Chunder was calling me again and I left another delicate trackside memento of my passing.

Back in the saddle, I discovered that the precipitous muddy slot through the trees had all the grip of a bobsleigh run and I was soon gathering momentum with alarming speed. Nothing I did with the brakes, gears or decompressor had any effect and I finally abandoned ship about half way down. The XR stopped dead against a tree, smashing the rest of the headlight mounting off the front and the number plate off the back.

Another rider crashed trying to avoid me so I dragged the bike off into the trees. It took about ten minutes to manoeuvre it upright and back onto the track but no sooner had I remounted than I crashed again, about twenty yards further down. This time the full force of the impact into a tree was taken by the front brake lever, which was pushed back to the bar in the process and promptly lost all retarding qualities - and no amount of pumping would revive it. Great. Just what I needed.

The end of this nightmare descent was a ten foot drop off a grassy slope onto another fire road, and rather than remount just to fall off again, I sort of slung myself and the bike down it in a heap. As I lay on the ground trying to stop my head from spinning, another rider came flying out of the forest and in an effort to avoid me veered off sharply into the trees yelping with pain as he struck the branches. In a supreme effort of self-sacrifice I scrambled up to give him a hand back onto the course before collapsing in a heap again.

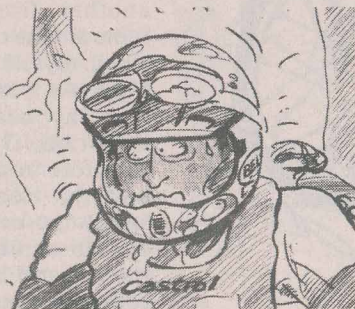
## TRAIL TALES...

By this time I felt so ill I was ready to sign up for lifetime membership of the Temperance Society. I just lay against the bank hoping that I might start to feel a bit better. I thought seriously about quitting right there and then because I had discovered to my horror that this fire road only marked the half way point down the 'descent from hell' - just 50 yards further along, the course went straight down through the trees again, and given my success with the first half, the prospect of attempting the rest with no front brake was frankly alarming. I eventually decided to 'go for it', hurtled down the first 50 feet or so completely out of control and managed to bale out without any further damage to myself or machine.

But every time I got back in the slot I just kept gathering momentum, even with a dead engine in first gear. The good guys seemed to manage by 'skiing' down with the front brake on and using their feet as stabilisers - but I didn't have a front brake any more! And besides, I now felt like a total novice, devoid of all confidence in my riding ability.

I crashed three more times before finally emerging onto the fire road at the bottom of the valley. A couple of marshals were shepherding riders out onto the public road and after exchanging a few pleasantries I suddenly felt an overwhelming desire to 'call for Hughie' once more. By the time I'd finished there was a horrible mess in the ditch and absolutely nothing left in my stomach. I felt like one of the undead, and a stake through the heart would have come as a welcome relief from the miserable, shivering torment I was suffering.

The tarmac road led back to the start and any sensible person would have just followed it back to salvation, but when I saw the arrows pointing

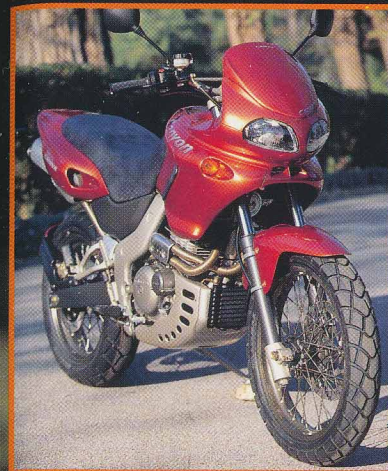


off up the next mountain I just thought 'got to go for it - got to do at least one lap'. Riding with all the verve and co-ordination of a geriatric granny with the 'DTs', I wobbled up the rocky climb which led to a grassy trail squeezed between a fence and a dry stone wall with a deceptively steep and tricky camber. With inexorable predictability I found myself off the bike, sliding down the slippery grass straight into the barbed wire fence where I remained trapped until a friendly marshal turned up to help me. The look on his face when he saw I was a marshal too had to be seen to be believed.

Then I was out on open moorland again on the only really peaty, boggy section of the whole circuit and promptly discovered just how useless a trials tyre can be in a bog. Even at 7psi it just spun uselessly in a nice clean rut, and it took what seemed like hours of energy-sapping heaving to extricate it.

Somehow I got through a tricky wooded section, across a stream, through a gate and promptly caught my foot on a log. Ow! The next trail mercifully held no horrors and brought me down to the special test laid out in a flat field which I negotiated without mishap at a very steady pace. Finally came the best bit of the whole course down some old railway tracks - though they were very slippery, and I just managed to catch the front end as the worn out front tyre broke away on a couple of occasions. I finally completed the 15 mile lap, more than four hours after starting out - about the same amount of time that eventual winner Carl Tiley took to do six laps!

My bike was broken, my body was aching, and worst of all somewhere along the course I'd lost the piece of paper containing the telephone number of the attractive blonde. I was gutted.



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