

# TOP biker

THE COMMUTING ISSUE

**WE RIDE THE:**  
GOMOTO MANTIS 2  
HONDA TWISTER  
KAWASAKI ER6N  
SUZUKI DR-Z400SM  
YUKA RM200  
YUKA ML150  
YUKA XT150  
YAMAHA TMAX

A WHOLE NEW RIDING WORLD!  
1100, 1200, 1500cc Power Up!  
12 FEBRUARY 2004

## BMW VS KTM

THE NEW 1200 GS AND  
THE 990 ADVENTURE,  
HEAD-TO-HEAD



**ADVENTURE**

BOLOGNA TO CAPE TOWN - ON DUCATIS!

**DESTINATION**

THE CEDERBERG AND CLANWILLIAM



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# WELCOME

OCTOBER 2008



It's quite common for magazine editors to start their welcome letters by saying, "This month, I'm really proud/interested about this/that whatever..." However, this month I really just, because I think we've put together an issue that is of great importance and relevance to the South African motorcycle - and in this case, even the potential motorcycleist. Because it's our annual Commuting Issue.

What we have done, has been to approach the bosses of the big five Japanese motorcycle brands in SA and ask them to recommend their best commuter - and tell us why it they think so. Then we took them for a ride to see for ourselves. We also tried to establish just how far a liter-of-petrol would get you on a scooter. And we feature a story about a riding school in Swaziland, of all places. On top of that, we've tested a few

Chinese scooters too, just to give a balanced view of what's on offer. Because, as I've said from the first issue that I became editor, **TIPSTER** will offer practical, real-world advice to its readers.

This is also why we decided to pursue our cover story that been-failed argument between supporters of the BMW 1200GS and the KTM 990 Adventure. So we spent two days and rode 300kms of really varied terrain to give the definitive opinion on just how these two bikes really compare. No **TIPSTER**, no comparisons, just real honesty.

Speaking of honesty, I have to set the best straight about sales figures that I quoted in Bob Burton's BMW as having sold in last month's issue. Somewhere there must have been crossed lines, and Ed Hill's magazine commented. The true figure, according to him, is that BMW is the big enduro market, over 800cc, enjoys a 70% share of the market, and not a 77% share of the total over 600cc market as I erroneously stated. My apology, Bob - the next bottle of red wine is on me.

In the September issue we also neglected to add Iain's 'Letter' photo inline to the "Main feature" feature (page 98) about the BMW Advanced Off-Road Course **TIPSTER** attended. Once again, we apologise for this oversight. It was unintentional and is one of those unfortunate things that can and sometimes do happen. But of the 99.9% of the stuff that we do get right in every issue, we get right in a way I'm very proud of.

And finally, it was with great sadness that we learnt of the recent passing away of Patrick van Heugt. He recently resigned - with my full blessing - from **TIPSTER** to pursue a career in PR, and corporate communications. He was to have continued to write for us, albeit in a freelance capacity. Our deepest condolences to his family. Patrick, my friend, adieu. It's been a truly enjoyable period.

**Iaco Kirsten**  
EDITOR



# ITALIAN STALLIONS

Few people have the opportunity and the will to do a Cape-to-Cairo journey. Fewer will attempt to do it from Italy. And only two have done it on a couple of red Ducatis.

Jaco Kirsten spoke to Robin Goode about their journey





# W

hen I first heard that two guys rode all the way from Italy to Cape Town on two Ducati Multistradas I was intrigued. I mean, wouldn't anyone be? As lovely as a Multistrada is to look at, surely it must rate as one of the worst bikes in the world to attempt such a journey on, right? I mean, most of the bikes you see doing journeys like these are KTMs, BMWs and a host of

medium-sized Japanese dual-purpose thumpers. But a Ducati Multistrada – essentially a commuting road bike? Well, that didn't prevent Robin Goode, a Capetonian who had been living in Turin, Italy, from going for broke and trying this rather unusual feat. Seven months and more than 30000km later, he and his Italian mate, Matteo Bottanelli, arrived home.

**TOPBIKE:** Well, firstly, how the hell did you end up in Italy in the first place?

**Robin:** I went up there to work as an art director. I had my own business in Turin, which did design, film work, advertising and photography. At that stage I had been living there for six years – everything was going well, I had met the right girl and I thought – ‘Well, I don’t want to be living here for the rest of my life. It was time to come back home to Cape Town.’ Then, when South Africa won the bid for the 2010 soccer World Cup, I had the idea to travel to Cape Town through Africa. First we thought of doing it on Vespas, but that was a stupid idea and, thankfully, people eventually talked me out of it.

Then we had the idea of creating a charity project for the soccer World Cup, whereby we’d donate all proceeds. The plan was to travel through Africa, seeing and experiencing its football for ourselves and documenting it, eventually being able to put a book together. We have actually managed to do that with our trip and have established a

charity organisation called ‘Muti’.

The other thing was that we were one of their clients – we were doing advertising for them, and when I told them the project of travelling through Africa for this charity project I asked them if they’d consider getting involved if we did it on Ducatis. So they said yes, but we first had to come up with a proper proposal and stuff. We told them that we’d be able to turn it into a marketing project for them, taking two essentially road bikes through Africa, taking lots of photography for them for marketing purposes. So, what started off as a charity thing also became an opportunity for Ducati to see how its bikes would stand up to this kind of treatment – and maybe help to dispel the perception of their fragility and unreliability. I mean, initially, even Ducati was reluctant! But then they realised that it could actually mean something for the brand if we tried it. And it turned out great.

**TOPBIKE:** So after the pitch, and the okay from Ducati, how were the bikes prepped?

**Robin:** Well, we went back and gave them a list of modifications that we wanted them to do, including raising the bikes’ suspension and changing the small 17-inch front wheels to bigger 19-inch wheels. They told us that this would take a year’s development and testing, so we decided to go with the smaller 17-inch wheels. The bikes were, essentially, totally standard, apart from the specially fabricated bash plates that Ducati’s racing department made for us.

**TOPBIKE:** How was your departure in Italy – was it a big procession?

**Robin:** It was quite funny, because we prepared for quite some time. Many people also tried to talk us out of it ... in the beginning even Ducati. And my mother was really worried. Many close friends took me for ‘walks in the park’, telling me: “You’re going to kill yourself!”

After all the money, energy and time that we invested it was almost an anticlimax. We had an official departure from the factory in Bologna, but there were almost no one to



Robin and Matteo about to depart from the Ducati factory in Bologna, Italy.



Next stop: Cape Town - via Europe, the Middle East and, of course, Africa.

see us off. We had our bags on our bikes and there we were ... it was crazy.

After some photography there, we left and rode to Croatia. The first two weeks were really hard, because you're not in a groove yet, your life has been turned upside down; you've gone from the comforts of home to literally living out of two bags on the bike.

Then we carried on to Serbia, then to Turkey, Syria and Jordan, before ending up in Egypt.

**TOPBIKE:** How much of your own money did you invest in the project?

**Robin:** Ducati helped us tremendously with preparation and supplying spares, even sending emergency stuff to us in Africa via DHL. And because we had Ducati as a main sponsor, other companies also got involved.

**TOPBIKE:** Who did your paperwork, stuff like Carnets de Passage?

**Robin:** We were very lucky, because Ducati had a guy called Marco di Mondì who arranged all our paperwork.

**TOPBIKE:** Any places where you had hassles?

**Robin:** Not really, except maybe Sudan, which makes it hard for you as far as paperwork goes, because they don't want Westerners there. They feel that Westerners give them 'bad publicity'. [Because of the



At the Serbian border, with their end destination more than 30000km further on.

**"The first two weeks were really hard, because you're not in a groove yet, your life has been turned upside down; you've gone from the comforts of home to literally living out of two bags on the bike."**





*civil war and claimed genocide in the Darfur region – Ed.]*

**TOPBIKE:** Describe your typical accommodation – did you favour hotels or tents?

**Robin:** In Europe we stayed in hotels, mainly because of the bad weather and rain, but once we got into Africa, we really tried to camp. Well, even if we wanted to go to hotels, there wouldn't have been any! And in any way, we really enjoyed camping. Past Kenya there were more resorts and dedicated campsites, but if you only go there ... I feel that is not really adventure riding. You have to camp in the bush, and deal with the consequences too – especially the animals and stuff!

**TOPBIKE:** When did you arrive in Cape Town?

**Robin:** the 21st of April, 2008. We first had a welcome party at the Ducati Club in Johannesburg and then a great reception at Ducati in Cape Town.

**TOPBIKE:** What food did you use – some guys pack freeze-dried food or did you 'wing it' and live off the land?

**Robin:** If you go to places where other people live; they have to eat, so there will be food. So I think Ewan and Charley were stupid, I mean, you don't need all that ridiculous stuff like muffins and chicken in the middle of nowhere. You eat what the people over there eat, and so we bought food every day – we almost never ate out of tins, but had fresh food instead.

**TOPBIKE:** How readily available was fuel?

**Robin:** The local people know that there are only two things that you'd be interested in – food and fuel. I mean, if you're a white guy in the middle of Africa, they know that's what you're interested in and they approach you, that's how many of them make money. We got so much advice about a lot of things – how to treat people, how to get around, and so on. But in the end it's all perfectly logical, really. And you just make do with what you can get.

**TOPBIKE:** What currency did you use?

**Robin:** We didn't know exactly what to do, so I took two kinds of credit card – a normal one and a pre-loaded, or 'rechargeable' credit card, similar to a debit card. The advantage of this is that if it got stolen, the card wouldn't work once the funds were depleted. Then I had traveller's cheques and a lot of cash, both euros and US dollars. Although dollars are still popular, some places in Africa now demand the euro, because of its strength. Always remember to have a back-up for your credit card, because

**Belgrade, Serbia. Note the beefy aluminium bash plates that Ducati built for the Multistradas.**



**Parked next to some a Mig25 'Foxbat' in Serbia.**



**At the ancient city of Palmyra in the Syrian desert.**

**"I was an amateur. I only started riding  
four years before the trip."**



Going for a fun ride in the  
Goreme region in Turkey.



In Syria, they tried to have the engine protection bars modified for more protection. Unnecessarily, it turned out.

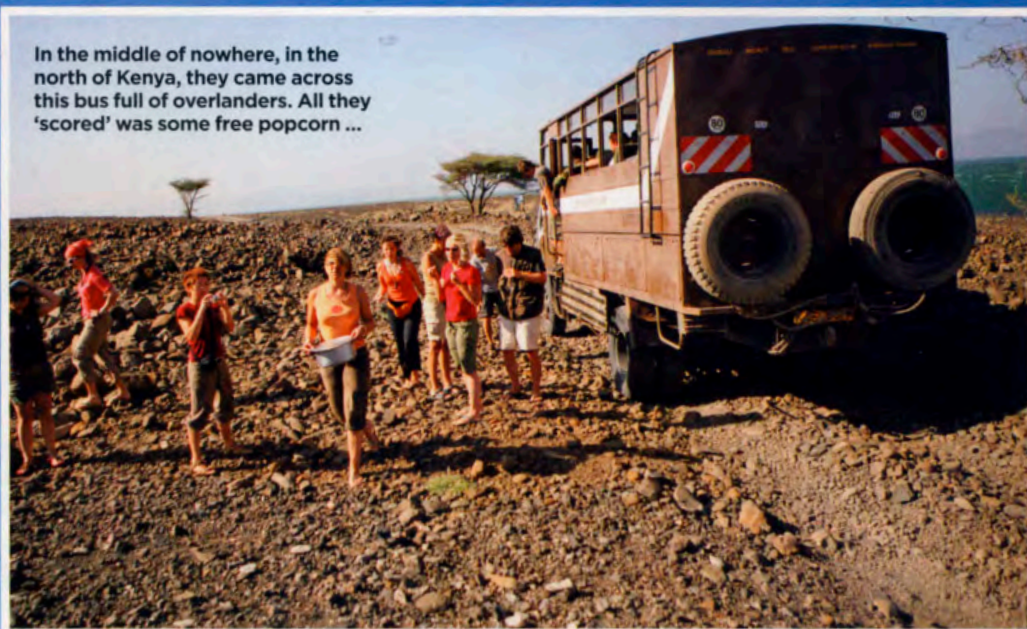


Visiting Krak de Chevalier, an old Crusader castle in Syria.

if it gets stolen you're bugged. No one is going to fly one out for you!

**TOPBIKE:** *What motorcycling background did you have prior to the trip?*

**Robin:** Oh, I was an amateur! I only started riding four years before the trip. I first had an old Suzuki GS500 for two years, then I bought a Yamaha TT600, which I used for trail riding in the Alps. And then we got the Ducatis. I had no experience of maintaining bikes either. But during the trip we'd have ample time to fix bikes during the day. To



In the middle of nowhere, in the north of Kenya, they came across this bus full of overlanders. All they 'scored' was some free popcorn ...





Ducati couriered through parts for servicing the bikes to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia.

remove the bikes' air filters in the beginning it took four hours, but in the end it took only 20 minutes.

**TOPBIKE:** Any fuel problems, or did they modify the bikes for lower grade fuel?

**Robin:** No, they told us that the Multistrada is sold in some Third World countries and that they've never had any problems. I mean, we took fuel filters along, but only replaced them once we reached Johannesburg ...

**TOPBIKE:** What was the most beautiful country for you?

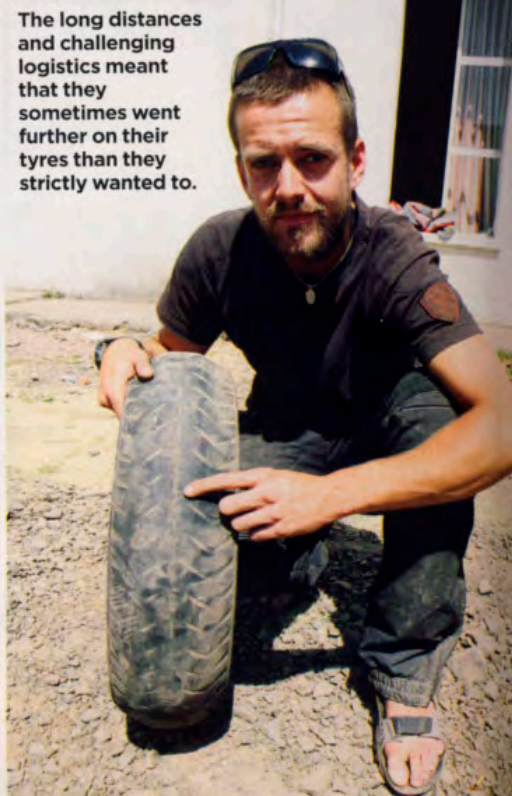
**Robin:** I think that Jordan was magical. It's



Along their way they met up with other travellers. Here, Matteo pokes fun at another manufacturer's bike, while showing his pride in his Italian Stallion.



Camping in Jordan.

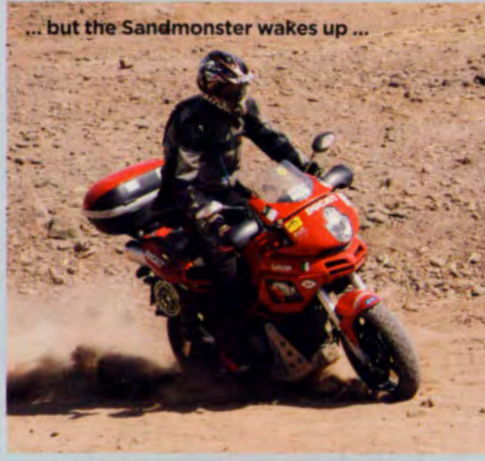


The long distances and challenging logistics meant that they sometimes went further on their tyres than they strictly wanted to.

Robin sneaking up to the sandmonster ....



... but the Sandmonster wakes up ...



... and decides to bare its teeth.



Then, suddenly, it bites!



Robin is helpless in the face of such speed and ferocity ...



... and throws in the towel, humbled by the sheer force of the Sandmonster's response.



a real Arabian desert with red sand. There's a beautiful road there called 'The King's Highway' – it is about 1000km long and runs along the top of mountains and through the desert.

**TOPBIKE:** Any negative experiences?

**Robin:** Not really. Although there were near Lake Turkana in Kenya, one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen. But after leaving the military barracks where we had stayed, we travelled south. Then we met up with people travelling from the south – after four days of seeing no other travellers – and they told us that there was a gang of about 150 heavily armed bandits roaming the area that we were heading for. We were about to

head there, but these people would definitely have shot and killed us if we had bumped into them.

At that stage we were a group of seven guys travelling together and four of them decided to keep on, but just to take a route around where they thought the bandits were.

But we two and an English guy decided not to take a chance and rather to take a route near the coast, although this turned out to be impossible to do because of the many rocks. The heat was 40°C; you'd ride three metres, fall, get

up, fall again ... and picking up the heavy bikes was hell, so we eventually decided to head back to the army barracks. I got heat-stroke – I vomited, had a terrible headache, and was very weak. But then we found out that the military guys had headed to where they thought the bandits were, so we just followed in their tracks. But we were very careful, stopping every two kilometres to scan the horizon through our cameras' telephoto lenses. But it was still very scary.

**TOPBIKE:** What were your most common mechanical problems?

**Robin:** Just bent levers and pedals from falling over! We even broke our hand guards off with all the falling over. At one stage I



Derelict house in Jordan. Israel is across the horizon.

fell and broke my foot peg off, so we took a thick, curved piece of stick and just duct-taped it to the bike as a makeshift foot peg – and rode all the way to Nairobi like that! Sometimes, in really rough parts when we'd be falling a lot, we'd just be laughing and that helped a lot to get through it.

TOPBIKE: *What did you pack that you didn't need?*

Robin: When you start planning before the trip you continuously ask yourself just how necessary the 'necessary' things are, trying to find out what is absolutely crucial. We really thought long and hard about what we packed, so there was very little stuff that we never used. But I did insist on packing my frisbee – I just needed it to boost morale and as a joke.

TOPBIKE: *Anything you're really glad that you packed?*

Robin: It has to be my hammock, which folds up very small. When times were tough and we had no luxuries, I only needed one tree – the other end I tied to my bike – and it brought me so much joy. It was such a little

**"Sometimes, in really rough parts when we'd be falling a lot, we'd just be laughing and that helped a lot to get through it."**



luxury and it made my trip so much better.

TOPBIKE: *How many rear tyres did you use?*

Robin: I used four tyres over 33000km. We used Pirelli's MT90 Scorpions, which are only suitable for really mild off-roading, but because of the Multistrada's 17-inch rear wheel we were limited in our choice. We had to use 160-section rear tyres, although the Multistrada takes a 190, but that didn't cause any problems in the end. The compounds were too soft, so we had to ride them until we saw the canvas. But although they were soft, they actually helped, because they didn't dig in, so we never got stuck.

TOPBIKE: *What did your luggage consist of?*

Robin: We had soft luggage, Australian bags called Andy Strapz. They're incredibly tough and have no zips, they only use clips to close. They were tied to the bikes' pannier racks. At the back we each had a duffel bag at the bag and a topbox at the back – but I'll never use a topbox off-road again, they don't last. **Bike**

Brimming with pride in front of Ducati South Africa in Sandton, Gauteng. From here, the last leg to Cape Town would be a breeze.

