

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT



From the editor.....

Here I sit on the balcony of my Palm Cove holiday apartment having just read Australian Motor Cycle News cover to cover and am in awe of how Chris Dobie and these guys get this news packed mag out on a fortnightly basis when I struggle to get the MLA Newspaper out seasonally!

Where does time go? It seems like only a month ago I was pulling apart ball bearing races to get 'the balls' for my primary school marble game and a short time later rubbing down the HR for a respray. I recall clearly when I bought my 74 Suzy TS 400 from 'Spanner' and married my bride, honeymooning in Fiji with a bung knee complements of an 'off' two days earlier.

This week I celebrated 21 years of adventure riding now under the Mid Life Adventures

banner, a platform to offer unique custom adventures to our past, present and future followers. It's odd that I can't remember a movie I saw last week but ask me for detail on any of these past 21 years of adventure rides and I'll spit it out at micro level. Thus is the power of the mind to remember the things it wants to remember and discards the irrelevant

This year has been a busy one for MLA's two man operation starting with a loop of Tassie in January, the epic ride across Mongolia in July, a Vietnam recon in August and the sensational 18 day journey in to Delhi's madness and the spiritual Himalayas in September. And all that wrapped around 'paid' employment!

As the latter winds down and the former up, I will be able to dedicate more time to what co-founder Bob and I are passionate about..... riding motorcycles and using these bikes as a tool to create lifetime memories. We don't compete with commercial operations as our sometimes one off tours are custom designed to be something 'out of the box'. Sure, we have our tried and tested menu of adventures which are no less exciting, but even those have a shelf life so if you see a ride which ignites the fire in you, make the call to us before it's too late.

This week we launched our web site www.midlifeadventures.com.au with the assistance of a very understanding and

cooperative Damian Moffatt of Damian's Designs. It's taken 18 months to get to this stage after a couple of false starts and we are extremely grateful for the hours Damian has put in to get this site operational. Note that this is NOT a booking site but rather a site to explore what adventures we are doing, when, and at what cost and if one or many of our adventures interests you, then contact us through the enquiry tab for further discussion. We help you with what to pack for each destination and answer commonly asked questions. We also have provided the link to past MLA Newspapers and the ability to subscribe to future editions. Any other questions or enquiry on tours or your request to join one of our tours are directed to either bob@midlifeadventures.com.au or myself.

In this Spring Edition, we bring you a special article on the just completed Himalayan ride 'From the pillion seat'. For a magical 12 days bouncing over broken rocky roads, over high altitude passes, through gushing waterways and deep gorges, Diana clung on to partner Wayne's RE Classic like 'legs' on a glass of fine wine. In this edition Diana recalls 'her' journey through the madness of Delhi, and across the astounding Himalayas cumulating on the Royal houseboats in historic Srinagar before returning to Delhi's magnificent Leela Palace and a tour of one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Taj Mahal.

For those who don't favour the challenging riding conditions of Nepal's Mustang regions or Thailand's single-track National parks, the Vietnam Discovery tour in July 2019 awaits you. This pillion friendly custom tour across Vietnam's central and upper highlands is limited to 12 riders plus 6 non-rider adventurers who want to experience the real Vietnam away from the tourist hot spots. Read article on page 5 for further details.

Lastly, we review the Royal Enfield Himalayan adventure bike and profile adventurer - Davis Knight and his take on the Himalayan.

We hope you enjoy the Spring Edition of the MLA Newspaper.

From the Pillion Seat....

Himalayas- A peaceful State where the Gods live



I survived the MLA Himalayan Adventure ride in India, and am very happy to be back home and in one piece. The ride was a lot more challenging than predicted and we were in 'survival mode' for a large part of it – especially my partner Wayne as he was the only one with a pillion and conditions got very tough at times (which I found exhilarating but it must have been hard work for him!). I did (reluctantly) spend a couple of days in the support vehicle (with a couple of various others who opted out due to age, injury or altitude sickness driven) driven by the most courageous and talented driver, Buti. Narrow roads, hairpin bends, no safety barrier, "beware of shooting stone" signs, thousand metre drops and hundreds of oncoming army vehicles and huge glinting transport vehicles were not a problem for Buti nor did they appear to be for the riders who were never far in front of the support vehicle!

Every day was completely jam-packed and totally exhausting – but riveting, exciting and never-to-be forgotten. We took 'the toy train on a very monsoonal day out of Delhi which crept at 20 kph thousands of metres up to the Summer Capital, Shimla and we ended the ride part of the adventure in the 500-year-old city of Srinagar in

the west of the volatile province of Kashmir. In the lower regions of the Himalayas, we passed through forests, lush green valley, via wild, barren mountain passes above 5000 metres and through confronting army border patrols with an abundance of guards casually wielding AK 47's.



The spirituality and magnificence of the Himalayas far exceeded my wildest dreams. My eyes were out on stalks as my peripheral vision clawed to take it all in. My spirits soared every minute of every day and (mostly) I found I had a smile on my face under my helmet as emotions roller-coasted between astonishment, awe, wonder, and delight. I had no idea it was going to be so exciting and so utterly different to anything I have ever experienced or imagined. The splendour of the colours of the mountains, the rock formations, the ever-rushing grey rivers and spectacular waterfalls took my breath away. Vegetarian curries for breakfast, lunch and dinner were astonishingly tasty and lunch was often served in tents somewhere high up in the Himalayas by gracious hosts.



We were boiling hot in Delhi and then freezing cold in the Himalayas as we went right up to the top of the highest motorable road in the world at 5602 metres whilst it was snowing. We stayed in remote villages, in wind beaten tents on the loneliest, highest, most isolated plain imaginable ringed by austere, soaring glacier-clad mountains, and then in opulent old-world houseboats in Srinagar where life seemed muted and so removed from anything vaguely familiar. And then, at last, thankfully, fell into the 6 star luxury of the magnificent Leela Palace in Delhi.

Whilst this marked the official tour end, no trip to India was complete without the visit to the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, both well worth the 500 kilometre round trip from Delhi to stand in one of the Seven Wonders of the World.



Last, I won't ever forget the madness of Delhi itself. I will never understand how the chaos works, but it does without anger or frustration. The two day pre ride tour arranged by MLA gave

MLA



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all 19 in the group a chance to visit Delhi's hot spots with my favourites, the rickshaw ride and walk through the old Delhi spice markets and the visit to the mosque where wealthy families come together to provide 10,000 meals a day to the needy.



Thank you to Mike and Bob of Mid Life Adventures for allowing Wayne and I the opportunity to share this unbelievable adventure with you and we both look forward to our next 'expedition' with MLA.

Diana

The Gentleman's Adventure Bike - The Royal Enfield Himalayan



Well there have been plenty of articles written and YouTube videos posted on RE's first entrant to the Adventure Ride market - the Himalayan, so I won't rehash what someone before me has already praised and complained about in relation to this simple 411cc chugger. What I will do is tell

you how I felt about the bike after riding it from the Indian summer capital of Shimla to the world's highest motorable peak in the Himalayas and then across what I consider one of the world's worst highways between Leh and Srinagar, a shotgun blast from the Pakistan border.

This journey was one I had done before in 2015 on an RE 500 cc Classic with 14 other adventurers so I knew what to expect and I was looking forward to the extended suspenders of the Himalayan compared with the short two inch travel of the Classics shocks and springs.



First impressions count and the simplicity of the design was appealing to someone like me who likes the idea of if it ain't busted, don't fix it. This 'gentleman's' Adventure Bike has been around for a couple of years now and most of the teething issues are sorted so what we have sitting in the car park at the Shimla Woodville Palace are 17 sparkling Himalayan's, 1 Classic and 2 Bullets waiting to take the Mid Life Adventures and the support crew on an 1800 kilometre journey over 14 days on everything the Himalayas could throw at us.

What immediately strikes me is the size of the bottom end which without cracking open the casing, must be housing truck like clusters of cogs to push the beast through 5 bands of speed.

In comparison, the barrel looks like a short stroker but no, it still drops 86 mm to produce a nice rumble from an attractive OEM pipe. Yep, the horsepower is a low 18kw but the long stroke

produces a nice torque curve to get you up and over the toughest, snottiest mountains without raising a sweat. And it does it day after day on the sniff of fuel and with the agility and grace of an adventure bike with a Bavarian or Austrian badge on the tank. Sure there are no fancy electronics, no auto choke, no pretty livery, no WP springs or Showa shocks, no TFT gauges, no slipper clutch and no ability to do a mono on demand, but what you do get for a measly \$5990 is an honest little Indian adventure pony which you will learn to love and accept its flaws very quickly.



This bike handles well, in fact very well on a bobby basic suspension setup. It feels nothing like its 165 kilos when you are weaving through Srinagar's insane traffic or over rocky riverbeds in fierce rapids from weather that the Himalayas likes to surprise you with. On the black top which is becoming more common in the restricted zones of Kashmir and through the Spitti valleys, the bike cruises beautifully up to 110 kmls per hour all day without complaining although 110 is not far from its top speed and I doubt that extracting a tooth or two from the back cog would make the bike any better at travelling across the Australian outback where 120-130 Kph is easily achievable from my old trusty DRZ. By day 8 as we head for Jispa, I'm really lov'in my Himalayan and the hard edges of the under padded saddle and the rattles from below somewhere become less of an issue. I'm now used to the underwhelming power and have learnt to adapt when the going gets tough although an extra 100cc's would be certainly welcomed.

Leaving the Himalayan's on the shore of the Dal Lake in Srinagar as we headed for our houseboat accommodation was an emotional moment akin to saying farewell to an old loyal and trusted friend.

Would I buy a Himalayan to add to the collection? .. probably not, but I am certainly looking forward to a reunion in Nov 2019 when we meet up again for the more challenging Nepal ride to the Lost Kingdom of Upper Mustang.

2019 Adventures

With 2018 tours under our belt we have **opened bookings** for the 2019 tours: [Vietnam Discovery Ride](#) in July/August and the [Lost Kingdom of Upper Mustang](#) (Nepal) in late October/November. These are two very different rides both with different appeal but equally adventurous.

For a while now we have been asked to put together a tour which is pillion friendly, does not require extensive off road skills and travels at a more relaxed pace allowing time to 'take it all in.'

Vietnam Discovery Ride

With that criteria, MLA has linked up with the best touring company in Vietnam - Vietnam Motorbike Tours to plot a route specifically for MLA from Na Trang south along the spectacular coastline then inland to zig zag along the mountainous border between Vietnam and Laos arriving in Hanoi 14 days later for either the flight home or for those who have time, to continue their adventure nor west to SaPa, east to Ha Long Bay or south to the village of lanterns on the central coast, Hoi Ann.

This tour, whilst mainly on the black top, is off the beaten track and will take you to places where tourists don't go. You will visit historic sights, stay in well-appointed accommodation in remote villages pass through coffee and produce plantations and do so at a pace you are comfortable with.

For those who are not motorcycle riders but would like to join the tour and experience the adventure, for the first time on any MLA tour, we have commissioned a luxury Mercedes Van to follow the route. The van is also available for pillions who would like time 'off the bike' for a while.



We have **6 spots available** on this ride so if you have not discovered this beautiful country nor have experienced their humble way of life, exotic cuisine and beautiful people, don't delay in contacting mike@midlifeadventures.com.au

Go to www.midlifeadventures.com.au for further details on the tour, for tour costs and itinerary details

Forgotten Kingdom of Upper Mustang

If you are a capable dirt bike rider and want a real adventure riding at 4000 metres with Mt Everest and the Annapurna mountains only a stone's throw away and where locals sleep in caves and Buddhists still reside and practice in ancient monasteries, then the Forgotten Kingdom of Upper Mustang Ride is not to be missed.

We have **only 4 spots** remaining on this remote ride which at this stage is set to depart from the trekking capital of Nepal, Kathmandu on **22nd October 2019**.

Again, for details, visit the website for all details www.midlifeadventures.com.au and have a look at our Facebook post on Mustang.

Wadd'ya Got for Sale?

Our regular riders Lars has yet to advertise his immaculate GS650 Sertao on Bike Sales so if you are in the market for a great adventure bike and are concerned about the weight of a GS 1200 or KTM 1190, then this could be the bike for you.

Price: \$7400 **ONO**
Odometer: 6909km

History / Ownership

1. Previous owner middle-aged male using bike only for city commuting. Did about 5000km.
2. Myself, done about a total of 5-6 long rides totalling about 1900KM. Has never been off road!



Excellent condition and immaculate presentation.

Fairly new battery (about 7 month).

Registration valid until Feb 2019. RWC Supplied.

If interested, contact Lars on 0404 245292

Rider Profile – Davis Knight

In past editions we have profiled our off-shore affiliates who have partnered with MLA to provide our adventurers with 'custom' tours to unique destinations. This edition we will spread our attention to profiling Davis Knight, chopper pilot, expert kite surfer entrepreneur, investment banker gym junkie and adventure rider who experienced the recent Himalayan Adventure with MLA.



What are your goals in life Davis and where would you like to travel on bike to?

My goal in life is pretty simple - to be happy and relaxed, and do what I can to assist others to be the same. It filters down into all the other choices I make; the things I do and the company I keep. As such, I spend a lot of my time in South East Queensland, where my 5 favourite pastimes are perfectly suited – beach, gym, kitesurfing, motorbike riding, flying around in other people's aircraft. I'm currently riding an Aprilia Tuono V4 1100, a KTM 1190 Adventure R, and a KTM 350 six days.

As adventurous as it is gallivanting around the globe, riding through the likes of the Himalayan spectacularness (I think I made that word up); I think I'd be really keen to do much more riding around Australia, Tassie, and even New Zealand.

So.... you're considering "an adventure" are you?

I'm not exactly sure what to expect.....perfect. Allow me to edify you of my experiences on the recent India trip.

Having no expectations will serve you kindly.... whether that means being completely unfamiliar with the itinerary is up to you. I can attest to that being a valid technique, as the guys have done an excellent job organising the trip. It may rarely seem that way, however.... you may hear mutterings of 'shambles' or 'disaster' at every juncture. But I can assure you that this is not the fault of the steering committee; nor is it something to get upset about. In fact, if you're happy to be in what could easily be a sub-continent version of Faulty Towers with 1.3 billion extras.... you may even come to enjoy the shenanigans. We're seeking adventure remember, cultural diversity etc.

For all of the perceived incompetencies, the delightful nature of our local hosts easily makes up for any inconvenience. But ask yourself – inconvenience from what.... this is how things are, and it's not all bad – just look how happy and welcoming the people are. Different yes, bad...maybe not.

Lesson – it's an adventure. Embrace the differences. The more different it is from life at home, the better.... otherwise it wouldn't be an adventure

Tell us about the riding itself?

On some level, you are ill prepared for this ride:
-If you are not a 'good' rider – some of the roads and conditions will challenge the limits of your comfort zone

-If you are not fit and resilient – some of the longer days, and back to back days after average night's sleep will challenge your stamina

-If you are a good rider and your limits won't be tested, I can assure you that the bike's limits will be! The bikes are interesting.... you know those KTM1190 adventure and BMW 1200 GSA style bikes – we'll its not them. If you're used to riding a Ducati or an R1 on the tarmac and a KTM six days or Husaberg on the dirt, then the limits of some ancient Royal Enfield technology, purporting to deliver a stampeding 20-something

wild horses, while boasting about an inch of suspension travel will probably be more your limiting factor than your riding ability. If you're mathematically inclined and a purveyor of copious spare time.... feel free to calculate how many of those horses are still galloping down the Flemington straight at 15,000 feet whilst trying to breathe through a carburettor. You get the idea.... if your limits aren't pushed, the bikes will be.

Lesson – take it easy. Don't expect too much of yourself or the bike (more on this later!)

Was the 'experience' what you hoped it would be?

Cultural experience and out of the ordinary riding aside – these trips are a mirror of life for the following reason:

It's all about the people - and what a great bunch of people. It is amazing how quickly a group of pretty much strangers can bond together like a long-lost family. All it takes is for the pattern of normal life to be interrupted, a completely different reality and it's like starting a new colony on another planet. For this reason alone, what an incredible experience. It certainly helps that Mike and Bob hand pick the group, so despite demographical variances; there is definitely an underlying commonality of like-minded, good people, generous, adventurous, open minded. Obviously, Mike & Bob can't perform the full Myers Briggs style psychological profile on all candidates; so, there's potential for a few personality clashes (and disorders) but it wouldn't be the same without all the key roles filled. So be grateful for them too.

Lesson - You get out what you put in. We all know it; but in a situation like this; the equation is amplified. Go all in – there's nothing to lose and everything to gain. It's not designed as a full-service luxury trip. You are part of a team from the moment you arrive.



Davis, unfortunately you 'zigged' when you should have 'zagged' but tell us about 'your' trip up until then.

As I eluded to earlier, I'm not qualified to comment on the finale of the trip...simply because I wasn't on it.

That's right, when I say "go easy on yourself", it's from experience.

At some stage you will feel less than 100% physically - due to tiredness, altitude, sensory overload, stomach upset (ranging from the mild 'night on the toilet' variety; to the recently coined "go-home gastro"). I decided to suffer in silence, continuing to ride while 'under the weather' (having not eaten or drunk anything for over a day). The next day's 7-hour riding stint in tough conditions eventually took its' toll on my ability to concentrate, and my unsurprising demise in the form of a "get off.... road.... sky.... road.... sky.... hospital" ensued. I suffered the standard motorcycling injury – busted clavicle. In reality, I don't suffer from pain much, and although I missed the end of the journey and no doubt many more bonding experiences, I had an amazing, unplanned and actually quite rewarding journey home. Through the right lens.... even a minor disaster can culminate itself into a positive experience. Cathay Pacific business class, heavily medicated on Endone and a few Gin & Tonics arguably helped.... special thanks to my on-the-ground assistant who waded through the quagmire of travel insurance to facilitate all that.

Lesson 1 - Firstly, go easy on yourself. If you're not feeling 100%, don't suffer in silence as you are part of a team and they will get you through it. A day in the support vehicle is nothing to be ashamed of....

Secondly, if you wish to get off the organised track and have some amazing experiences in regional India and spend some quality time with some wonderful people - don't be too down on the idea of busting a bone and the ensuing trip

home. The comedy sketches continued; but they remain entertaining if you can view them through the right perceptual filter.

Tip – A lot of travel insurance offered by reputable companies actually outsource the cover to overseas companies. RACQ for example, outsource to 'Tokio Marine Nichido'. Dealing with them has been a diabolical nightmare, and I highly recommend choosing an insurer who actually covers the policy themselves (Allianz etc).

You're a philosophical sort of guy Davis so what 'take away' do you have for our readers?

-Life is short; and the years of being physically capable are even shorter.

-Think of all the things you wish to do (that involve being fit), then calculate how many years you have left to do them.

-How much money must we have to stop being trapped by the illusion of financial security.

-How many financial safety nets must we have in place before we feel justified in taking some time off (from making more money) to spend some of that hard-earned time.

-What if as a society, we have it all wrong and we are trading our precious and limited time for the unlimited (endlessly printed and depreciable) money, and the dollar-based assets it allows us to buy.

-Time is the most valuable commodity my friends - spend yours wisely.

Thanks, MLA, for allowing me to share my journey with you. You have given me an astounding experience which will be remembered as one of the highlights of my life.

Davis

Closing comments

So we have just scraped in to get to you the Spring edition of the MLA Newspaper on time. As always, I thank the contributors, Diana and Davis for their editorials. You are better to hear rider comments on our tours than from Bob and I as we rave about every ride we do, even the second and third time around.

In the next edition, Summer 2019 we will provide a post ride summary of The Kings of The Mekong Ride in February (fully booked), a profile of Vietnam Motorbike Tours owner Jason Thatcher who we are partnering with for custom Vietnam and Laos tours, and the other regular features of the MLA Newspaper.

2018 has been a big year for MLA and we could have not run our successful tours across Mongolia and into the Himalayas without the assistance of our overseas partner, Motorcycle Expeditions. Thanks also to our local sponsors, Contrast Signs, Andy Strapz and Newfarm travel who gets us to destinations on time every time.

From Bob and I, we wish you and your families a safe and happy Christmas and we look forward to taking you on more great adventures in 2019 and beyond.

