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**YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE VERY BEST BIKING ADVENTURE HOLIDAYS ON THE PLANET**

Welcome to our adventure travel section. We've trawled the world to find the latest, most exciting biking holidays it's possible to have, and each month we'll review one of them. From a weekend's off-road riding in Andalucia to a month spent crossing the Andes in Argentina, adventure riding has taken off on a global scale. Fact is, there's never been a better time to get out there and see the world from the seat of a bike. What you waiting for?



**IN THIS MONTH...**  
**THE BRITS ABROAD**

If the idea of thrashing your bike around Europe tickles your fancy but the thought of doing it alone is a bit daunting then we have the holiday for you. *TWO* joins an organised tour that takes in the Nurburgring as well as some of Germany's best riding roads. The beer flows almost as much as the roads around the Ruhr and we went along to join in the party.



Roadside bukkake was becoming increasingly popular in many Eastern European countries





If you come here they will turn you away



Fingerbobs had turned nasty



The mood lightened during the river crossing

**W**hen have you ever heard of a riding holiday where you need to pack extra kneesliders instead of loo paper? Well until Kevin Smith at Wheeltrax Motorcycle Tours got on the phone to us, we hadn't either. He offers riding holidays in Germany for riders of all types of bikes, but it was the offer of a proper sports-touring holiday with a bunch of lunatics from a GSX-R mob that sounded appealing to me "This is where the sports bike riders from the UK come for a holiday," chuckled Kevin. Last time I checked sports bikes were for, well, showing off really, and not tremendously good at covering vast tracts of land. Granted you can't do 168mph with a tailpack and a day sack (as we did) when riding a nodding tourer, but isn't that the whole point of long-distance riding? I caught up with Kevin and the self-named GSX-RBoyz, who were taking in the seven-day 'Great Escape'.

The idea of Kevin's guided rides is pretty simple. Stump up the cash (prices start from £250) and Kevin will be your personal guide around some of the finest roads of central Germany. Oh, and a few laps of the legendary Nurburgring. "What happens if one of us has a big crash out here?" I ask. "We've only ever had one injury that was worth stepping in for," says Kevin. "A guy got silly on the Ring and injured himself. When I have to I can step out of the tour-guide role and take on a different role. I'm fluent in German and have a lot of experience dealing with local bike dealers, so while we've had bikes damaged we never struggle to solve problems."

So why Germany? After all, most people think of the South of France as a more common destination for biking holidays. "We did a lot of research and did indeed look at the French Ardennes region, but the French seem to hate the English! My wife suggested Germany, so we bought a big map and started researching, and all the mentions seemed to be of this area. Every time we found a reference to a good road we stuck a pin in a map, and all the pins were in the same place. The Mosel region of Germany is perfect. It's on the Eastern edge of central Germany and only four hours' riding time from Calais. We came up here for a holiday, and it only took one look to realise that this is where we should be."

**"...PICTURE TRYING TO HERD A BUNCH OF CATS AND YOU'LL GET AN IDEA OF WHAT KEVIN HAD TO UNDERTAKE, BUT HE MANAGED IT ON HIS BANDIT AND WE MADE IT BACK ON OUR GSX-RS FOR A BEER..."**

So who comes out? "We get a really broad range of riders. Lots of slow and steady groups on cruisers and large touring bikes, as well as groups like the GSX-RBoyz, the sports bike brigade who are looking for a bit more of a rush. We have 10 pre-planned routes that we use, the roads and views are stunning, they suit any style of riding." And excuse us, but what do the locals think of you blasting around their roads with a bunch of British sports riders? "We stick to the speed limits 100% in town, but the open roads are generally deserted so nobody really gets to see us whipping along."

The guys had already been out for a few days, so we arranged to meet at the Nurburgring and take in a few laps. I'd only just met them and already my nerves were doing that thing they do when you're waiting to go out for a fast track session. The GSX-RBoyz had come out here for one thing: to go fast. I said my hellos while they were busy taping camcorders to their bikes to record their Ring-side antics. Founders Chris Hope and Ali Buckman have been friends since they were kids and started the web-based bike club in 2006. "It started off as just a place to put pictures of our

bikes and to share a common interest," says Chris. "Then it just grew and grew, so now we have members overseas, people we will probably never meet". Back in the day guys like Chris and Ali would have simply stuck a poster on the wall of their local café letting people know they were starting a club, but my initial concerns of bumping into a gang of nerdy internet-loving bikers was misplaced, thank God.

Right now I'm in the carpark and Chris had just finished his first lap of the Ring. "Sweet Lord, that is better than sex", he stammers as I slide a cigarette between his shaking, adrenaline-charged fingers. As the rest of the group come in it's pretty clear that everyone was enjoying themselves. What was strange was how quickly the lads got over the experience of riding the famous Nordschleife and got back to talking of how good the roads were that they had ridden. "Kevin is the man when it comes to the local roads" laughs Dave Goodger, "he has shown us some of the best roads any of us have ever seen, but we don't tell him because he will never fit his head into his helmet if it gets any bigger". The group hadn't been with Kevin that long but already they had a rapport with them, which was great to see.

It didn't take long at all to see what all the fuss with the roads was about. They're similar to the Ring: fast, flowing, constant radius bends that are well surfaced and challenging. The pace was quick, not all of the riders could keep up with Kevin but no one got lost or complained. "I make sure that every bike can see the headlights of the bike behind, and if we get to a junction or a roundabout we wait for the group to close up". His system works, even when we get to the motorway and everyone buggers off chasing Porsches. Picture trying to herd a bunch of cats and you will get an idea for what Kevin had to undertake, but he managed it on his 1200 Bandit and we all made it back to the hotel for a beer.

The boys drank much the same way as they rode: hard. Kevin was slightly less exuberant and always on hand to talk about the riding, or just to help people feel as relaxed as possible during their trip. "I stay with the guys 24hr a day regardless of the fact I only live up the road from the hotel. A big part of the holiday is socialising with the guys, I plan most

**"...EASY YOU MIGHT THINK, BUT TRY IT AT AFTER SIX PINTS WITH A BRUISED SCROTUM AND IT ALL BECOMES A BIT MORE OF A CHALLENGE..."**



Note queue of traffic in the background and 'omigod' throttle hand snapped shut on the right. Boyz will be boys...



Nice arse...

of what goes on so that it feels spontaneous, so that I look relaxed as it is happening, but it does take a lot of hard work." The hotel had plenty of facilities to keep our interest, including a two-lane 10-pin bowling alley. By the time we got on it the local beer had worked its magic, so we played over-arm bowling followed by whacking the closest person to you in the knackers. Silly but hilarious when you have had a drink. Kevin also introduced us to a local game that involved hitting a nail into a piece of wood with a hammer. Easy you might think, but try it at after six pints with a bruised scrotum and it becomes a bit more of a challenge. I went to bed happy (and pissed.) In one day I had ridden across Europe, ridden the Ring and discovered some of the most amazing roads possible. And made friends with a bunch of like-minded blokes. Not once had any one asked what kind of mpg figures I was getting out of my bike, nor which tyres would offer the most mileage per pound. Your typical touring holiday this is not.

The next morning we dragged the bikes out of the secure garages and Kevin set about setting the suspension on Dave's 600. Using his racing experience he knows how to make the most of your bike and can match it perfectly to your riding style. The GSX-RBoyz slotted into a rhythm behind Kevin and we headed in the general direction of the Rhine. En-route we covered a 22km section of road called the Gelbachtal. It was simply outstanding, 22km of 2nd and 3rd gear bends that we later worked out to be at the rate of 15/20 bends per minute. Stunning views, amazing surface.

That road blew me away. Sitting back and watching the lads the picture I would paint was the same as any sunny Sunday at any bike meet in the UK; blokes smoking, laughing and talking turkey. Only difference was they were doing it in the most amazing backdrop.

One of the GSX-R mob, Shane Hurwood was talking to Kevin about his riding. One of the feathers in Kevin's Germanic hat is the fact he offers rider training to anyone that comes on his gigs. In a former life Kevin used to teach bike instructors how to instruct so he knows more than a thing or two about road sense and manages to pass it on without sounding like a condescending ex-copper. Shane had used the fact that he was doing some training while he was here to sell the holiday to his missus. "She thought it was a great idea for me to come out here, especially when she realised that I would come home a better rider. I forgot to let her know that we would be doing the Nurburgring and riding as fast as we could all day for the rest of the trip."

Over a plate of German weirdness that night (I have never been a fan of German food, it has to be said) we were chatting as a group about what they wanted out of the trip. All the usual points came across: wanting to go fast without fear of losing the old licence, experiencing the Ring and riding some new roads. Then one of the lads, Nathan ▶

The Leeds supporter promptly realised his mistake, made his excuses and left!



**"...THE ROAD WAS SO GOOD, TO BE HONEST I COULD HAVE SPENT THE WHOLE DAY PLAYING ON THAT ONE STRETCH BUT THERE WAS PLENTY MORE TO SEE AND DO..."**

Preserved forever on Youtube



## NURBURGRING FOR NOVICES

The Nurburgring is a public toll road. You tip up, wave some money and on you go. No briefing, no nonsense. Porsches, lots of 'em, Puntos, absolutely, but buses? Yep, them too. You would have to be really stupid to expect to be able to go nuts if you hadn't already done at least 50 laps. The onus is on you to keep an eye on your mirrors, if something is coming up behind, you put your indicator on and give way. If you crash, the circuit maintenance team would prefer to just sweep you and your bike out of everyone's way. If they can't they shut the circuit and tidy up properly. By properly I mean they have to replace sections of damaged Armco, it takes time and costs (you) a fortune. Around £3,000 upwards. My circuit knowledge extended to playing Playstation games, and was as good as useless. One section has a 120mph straight into a really fast left, you barely roll the throttle, and just as I was tipping in a GT3 Porsche flew past, right on the bit of road I needed to be on. Scary? Er, yes. Make sure before you go that your bike is in tip-top road legal condition. Noisy bikes aren't allowed out and it's a long way to go to find out so keep the noise down. Before you go make sure you have an EHIC card, this has replaced the old EH111 card. I'm not scaremongering, I'm being realistic, which you should be if you want to enjoy the place. Go there and try too hard before you know the place and you will come home battered and bruised!

[www.nurburgring.de](http://www.nurburgring.de)



Boris Johnson promised to do something about the graffiti on the North Circular



All quiet on the western approach



A completely straight road. And he cooks it!



Honestly, Shane's not as scary as he looks

**"...THEY'D RIDDEN HERE BEFORE AND BEEN BEATEN INTO A COCKED HAT BY THE LOCAL RIDERS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHERE THEY WERE GOING..."**

Hurwood, made an interesting point. He had ridden in Europe before and had been beaten into a cocked hat by local riders on their roads because he simply didn't know where he was going. For him, Kevin levelled the playing field as he now knew where he was going. "I ride a GSX-R, I like to ride fast, get past people and do my best to live up to the bike's reputation. If you tuck in behind Kevin you know that you can go fast, keep up with the locals and maybe get past a few." I questioned how much a day or two of riding the roads would empower him over the locals who've been riding here all their lives, but everyone agreed. GSX-Rs beating the locals, this is what they wanted to hear. All whacked him in the plums, we jumped back on the bikes and nosied up another snaking road towards Cochem.

One guy on the tour was riding a Triumph Sprint ST, Richard Washington. He had been well and truly bitten by the German bug. 10 years ago he had no interest in bikes, but in making friends with Kevin he found a passion that he never knew existed. Typical born again biker syndrome, you may think. But how many born again bikers would sell everything they have to buy a chalet in the grounds of the hotel that Kevin uses for his tours? Richard has done exactly that. "I'm 61 years old, I could stay in the UK and work myself in to the ground, or I could live out here in these beautiful surroundings and ride these fabulous roads. It didn't take me long to choose where I would rather be."

The German experience was good enough for half of the boys on the tour that we went on to re-book for September. If you need concrete excuses to give to your missus to be allowed out onto something like this, Kevin has a long list. If

it's just simply to feed your need to ride amazing roads in a surprisingly welcoming country, he can do that too. Those that might have read my previous jaunts to far-flung places, with nothing but a camera and a helmet under my arm will be familiar with the fact that I generally prefer my biking adventures to be a solitary affair. The ride that I joined may have been a little extreme and may not be to everyone's taste (these GSX-R boys do tend to make a noise about things), but the roads are amazing and Kevin was very good at making the most of them. For anyone who's never considered Germany as a biking holiday destination, think again. There's more to this place than beer and sauerkraut. [www](#)

## WHO WHAT HOW?

**COST:** From £250

Wheeltrax is the best allied invasion of Germany for at least sixty years. Kevin has thought about all the things you would forget in order to make your trip as fun and involving as possible. Trips start at just £250 for a three night stay with a lap of the Nurburgring, and stretch up to £612 for seven nights including a lap of the Ring, a cruise on a river boat down the Rhine and everything else you need for a proper good time. All prices include accommodation.

**CONTACT:** [www.wheeltrax.com](http://www.wheeltrax.com)