

ADVENTURE RIDING EXPLAINED

By John Nick.

Adventure Riding, we hear the term, but what exactly is an Adventure Ride, a rugged off road bash, or a gentle cruise in the country? In fact Adventure Rides cover this broad spectrum and more, so let's explain some of the variations, what bikes are suitable and what terrain is covered.

Adventure riding is the most accessible form of off road riding there is. It is non competitive and can be as simple as just jumping on your Dual Purpose bike with a map and exploring the gravel back roads in your area, or further afield. On the other hand Adventure Riding can involve tours to foreign lands, or small groups of riders on lightweight specialist off road bikes (though still road legal) covering difficult off road terrain.

There are four main variations to the Adventure Ride theme, DIY Adventures, Adventure Safaris, Adventure Rides/Trail Rides, Guided Adventure Trail Rides and Adventure Tours. They can be just single day rides, or last up to several weeks. As these Adventures vary so much in structure and emphasis lets take a look at each in detail.

DIY ADVENTURES

Simple as the words say DIY Adventures are ones that you conjure up your self, easy backroads, legal paper roads, bush trails, it is up to your imagination. My only words of caution are keep it legal, get permission and if you are going remote, consider what communications you might need to do if something goes wrong. See the DIY Adventures tab for some of my legal road favourites.

ADVENTURE SAFARIS

Adventure Safaris like the Yamaha Safari, are multi day rides lasting from three to five days. The Yamaha Safari is a three day ride where riders self-navigate a pre-planned course along with up to 150 other riders. The route may be up to 300 km per day and will include some tar sealed highways and back roads, gravel roads, rougher clay or grass paper roads, and farm, and forest tracks. The basic route is suitable for large and small road legal trail and dual-purpose bikes from 200 to 1200 cc. You will see bikes ranging from little Yamaha 225 Serows to big BWM 1250GS models. Some riders even opt to take pillion passengers. More experienced riders on lighter bikes might get the chance to take optional

more challenging deviations, which will be interspersed through the route. Safaris are designed for riders with some off-road experience. If you are a hot and fast trail racer you may find the Safaris too relaxed for you. Much emphasis is made on socializing, camaraderie, plus good food and accommodation. Safari rides can be point to point using a different venue each night, or set up on a cloverleaf pattern, with riders returning to the same venue. Where multiple venues are used support vehicles carry the rider's luggage.

ADVENTURE RIDES AND ADVENTURE TRAIL RIDES

Adventure Rides are very much like Safaris only shorter, usually just one day and designed for large and small dual purpose bikes from 200 to 1200 cc, usually with optional loops to take into account skill and fitness. There may be up to 100 and even more riders taking part. Accommodation may or may not be provided and catering may just consist of lunch. As with Safaris, riders self navigate with route sheets provided. Rides labeled as Adventure Trail Rides are intended solely for lighter weight trail and road legal enduro bikes.

GUIDED ADVENTURE TRAIL RIDES

These rides are designed for riders of lighter road legal enduro-style bikes from 250 to 450 cc riding in a small, guided group of up to 20 riders. Typically you will see 250 to 450 cc enduro four strokes on these rides. Britton Adventures and High Country Trail run several rides up to five days in duration throughout NZ. These rides fully guided with lead and tail riders and supported by back up vehicles that carry luggage and spares. Guided Adventure Trail rides will have a more off-road oriented route and may feature some quite technical off road options. Though there will be a few sealed roads and plenty of gravel, the emphasis will definitely be on rougher off road terrain, farmland, forest tracks and even tight single-track bush. It's essential to have full knobby tyres and if wet, these rides are not generally suitable for beginners. Guided Adventure Trail rides can be point to point, using a different venue each night, or set up on a cloverleaf pattern with riders returning to the same venue. Comfortable accommodation and all meals are included and where multiple venues are used the rider's luggage is carried by support vehicles,

ADVENTURE TOURS

Adventure Tours are just what the name implies and usually feature exotic overseas destinations. Several NZ companies offer rides overseas for Kiwis in regions as diverse as India, South America and Mongolia. Britton Motorcycle Adventures for instance offer Bali, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Mongolia on their calendar. These rides can be from one week to several weeks in duration. The riding conditions range from virtual road

riding on narrow local back-roads to the natural grass steppes of Mongolia, where no roads exist. Adventure Tours are all fully supported with accommodation, meals, motorcycles and tour support vehicles all included.

ORGANISED ADVANTAGE

While its great to do your own thing, the beauty of organised rides is that the organizers have already selected the most likely regions and scoured the area for the best routes. At the local level they will have contacted forestry companies, gone knocking on farmers doors and worked through local schools and service clubs.

All this costs a lot of time and money and as most landowners (even forestry companies) nowadays want some payment for the use of their land and maintenance of tracks, Adventure riding doesn't come free. You will however get a lot of riding for your dollars. It's primo stuff too, some of the best tracks and trails in the world, mountain tops, great views, hidden valleys and sparkling streams, and as road legal bikes have far less impact land managers and farmers are more likely say yes. Even conservation areas are regularly used.

If you are venturing overseas it makes sense to be in a well-founded organised group. Not only will they ensure your food is safe, bikes prepared and the route is well planned, but they will have contingency planning in place to deal with possible emergencies.

SELF GUIDING VERSES GUIDED

Many local Adventure rides are self-guided. This enables organizers to allow more people on the ride and keep costs down. There are more people to rub along with, though once out in the wilds at times you may wish to see more of your fellow riders than you actually do. Self- guiding involves using route sheets, not arrows, as with a charity or club trail ride. You will be supplied with a roll of route instructions, which are fitted into a homemade route sheet holder. You need to knock this up from a kiddies' clear-topped lunch box. Far from being a chore self-guiding is fun and can make the ride more social and mentally satisfying.

Guided rides cater for much smaller groups and longer duration, so they naturally cost a lot more. The group is led and followed up by very experienced guides, who will not only show the way and interpret the sights and history along the trails, but will help with riding tips and technical problems. Riding in a small group for several days, sharing the sights and challenges builds a uniquely intense camaraderie, which every adventurer should experience at least once. Most will become hooked for life.