

# Going Where the Rental Bikes Aren't



# Today's Topic

- For the last 14 years I've (mostly) had a job, and haven't been able to do the kind of uninterrupted year+ long trips I'd like.
- So I've been doing a RTW trip, one month at a time. Flying somewhere, finding a bike, riding.
- My budget is tight, and I like to visit areas with limited tourist infrastructure. Bike rentals usually aren't an option.
- This presentation is about finding the bike, planning the trip, and some other stuff.
- I'm not an expert. This is a work in progress.





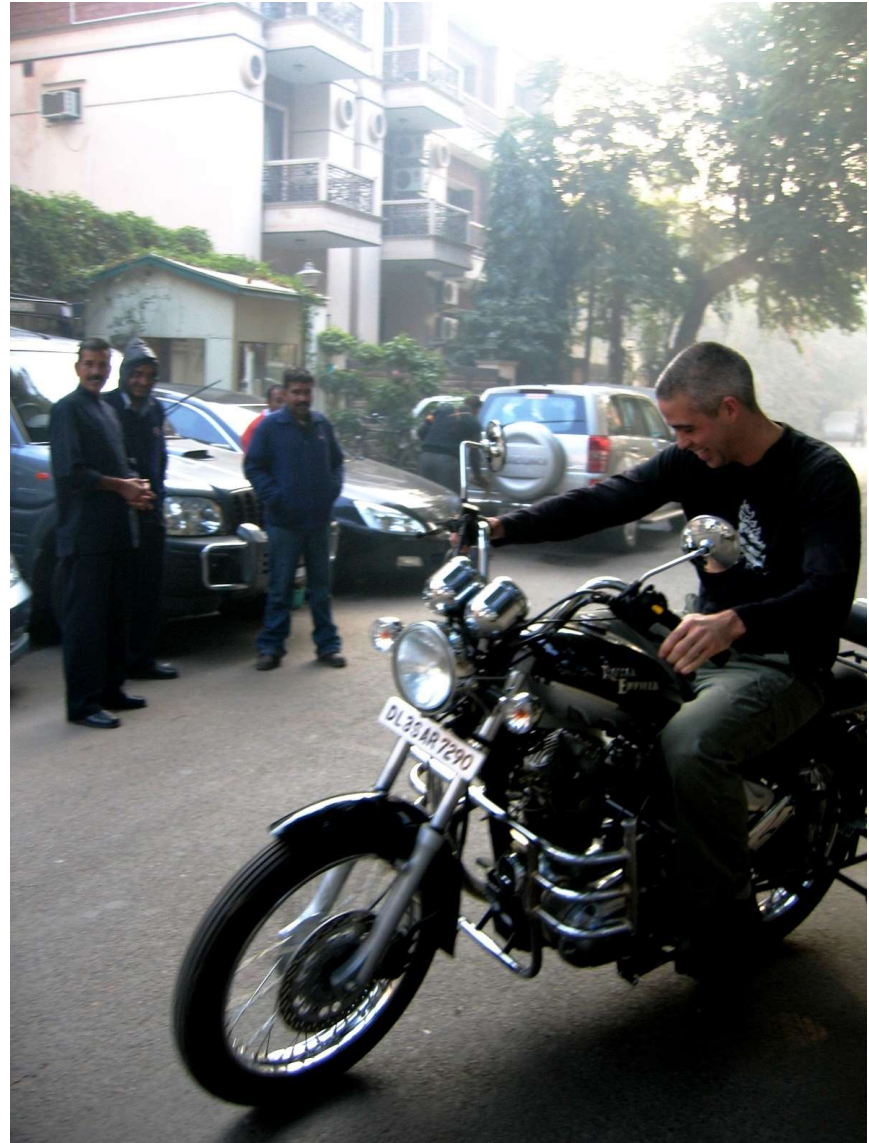
In 2002 I flew to Vietnam to go backpacking for a month. I found a 125cc Minsk at a moto shop in Hanoi and delivered it to a moto shop in HCMC three weeks later for \$150 net.







In 2008 I flew to India to buy a Royal Enfield and tour around the Himalayan foothills. As it turned out, my buddy from school had an enfield in his basement, which he loaned me for a month.







In 2009 I flew to Colombia to do a private hire of an Aprillia from a guy named Mike on advrider. He rented me his personal bike for a month for around \$1,500.







In 2010 a friend and I flew to Uganda. We arranged a private hire of two bikes – from total strangers – for a loop through Uganda/Rwanda/Burundi. We found the bikes through a local motorcycle club, and paid ~\$1,600 total for both bikes for a month.









In 2014 a friend and I flew to Vietnam and purchased two 125cc 2-strokes for \$500 apiece. We rode ~1,100 miles through Vietnam & Laos for a month on a mix of dirt and pavement. Sold the bikes at the end for \$175 each.







Last winter a friend and I purchased two 250cc dualsport bikes in Ghana for \$1,000 apiece. We rode 3,000 miles through Ghana, Togo, & Cote D'Ivoire – approx half dirt – over a month, and sold the bikes for \$500 each at the end.







# Chinese/Indian Dualsports

- Chinese & Indian dualsports are becoming more and more available in the developing world.
- The cost is low, they're reliable, parts are available everywhere, and almost any conceivable problem can be fixed overnight.
- They 'blend' with the environment, unlike big adventure bikes.
- They're surprisingly fun to ride, and more than adequate for developing country riding.





# Choosing a Bike



- Pick a brand that's all over the streets
- Find the 'motorcycle market.' The dealerships and mechanics are often tightly clustered in a single area.
- Ask around about the most reliable brands. Ask anyone: people at hotel, randos on the street, etc.
- Ask the seller/dealer if they can handle registration and insurance. If you want to cross borders, let them know, in case there's special paperwork.
- If you have to buy the bike in someone else's name due to ownership laws, get/forgo a letter from the person saying you're ok to ride it.



























Go take a look at the CSC bikes,  
specifically the TT model. This is  
a lot like what you'll find  
overseas.

# Choosing a Country

- I pick a country I want to visit first, then I worry about finding a bike later.
- Countries without a developed tourist infrastructure are my favorite: less tourism = more authentic interactions.
- Countries with a bad reputation or which recently emerged from a political or military conflict are more interesting than stable countries.
- I look for places where I'll be as interesting to the locals as they are to me, so we can have a genuine exchange.
- Being vulnerable is awesome (Louis Price).







# Advance Research

- Networking: I send an email to all my friends, post on facebook, and post on advrider looking for advice and contacts in the country I want to visit.
- Google Imaging things like “Ghana Motorcycle” or “Dehli Traffic” to see the kinds of motorcycles on the road, the number of motorcycles in the traffic mix, and the road/traffic conditions.
- Google Imaging different regions to see what’s interesting or boring.
- Google Earthing interesting terrain features.
- Working the online forums like advrider and HUBB.
  - A post in the regional forum
  - PMing members who live in the country
  - Replying to old threads and chatting with people who’ve already been
- It’s awesome if you can find a local contact!! People are surprisingly willing to help.

# Choosing a Route

- Never plan a route. Once on the road, I try to plan no more than a few days ahead.
- Take paper maps. Starting from day one, I ask people what's interesting and worth visiting and note and circle these things on the maps.
- Try not to spend more than three contiguous days in the same terrain. Desert, mountains, coast, city, etc.
- Separate 'noodling' days from 'change of scenery' days. Noodling is exploring, change of scenery is motoring.
- Dirt roads that appear to stop on one side of a terrain feature (like a lake or mountains) then start again on the other side, often connect.
- The most direct route between two places is usually the least interesting.





# Selling the Bike



- Start thinking (but not stressing) about how to sell from day one. You don't want to waste a lot of time trying to sell it at the end.
- Be ready to accept a fire-sale price. It's totally possible to sell a bike on a same-day basis, but you're not going to get much. Set expectations accordingly.
- Consider selling back to the person/dealer you bought it from.
- Consider offering someone local a fat % of the selling price if they find a buyer.
- Consider the internet: in Vietnam I found expat buyers through a craigslist post I put up three days before we got to Hanoi
- Consider donating the bike to a worthy NGO, or giving it to someone who assisted you. This will relieve the stress of selling at the end, and you'll stoke someone out.

# Money

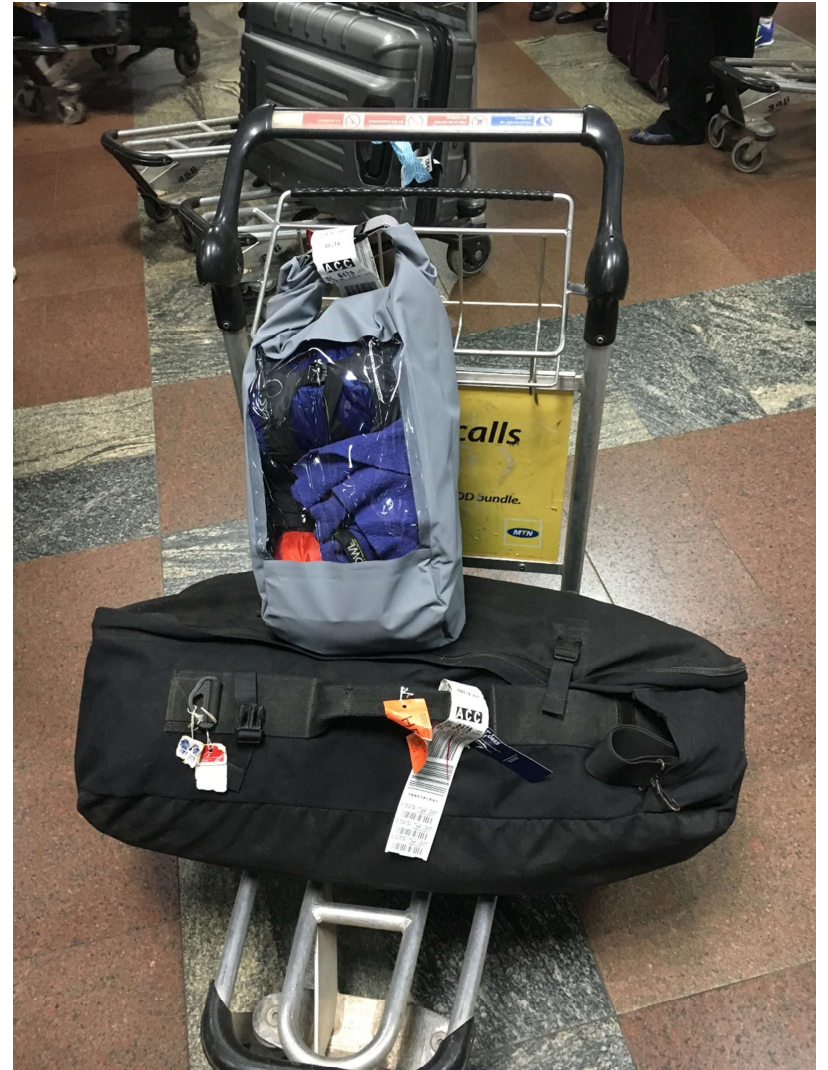
- \$1,000 for the bike, maybe get some back at the end
- \$100-150 for license/registration
- \$1,500 for the flights
- \$15-20/night comfortable lodging
- \$15/day quality food & booze
- \$10/day gas on a small bike
- \$500 for some indulgent thing you didn't plan for





# Some Things I Take

- Paper maps acquired beforehand online
- Extension cord with multiple outlets
- Delorme InReach
- Unlocked cellphone for local SIM cards
- Good tire patches & tire levers
- Books for reading, loaded on a Kindle
- Earplugs for sleep
- My own helmet
- International drivers license??





# Camping Kit

- You'll probably camp a lot less than you think.
- Backpacking tarp for ground or overhead cover
- Summer sleeping bag in a compression sack
- Mosquito net
- Thermarest (neoair style)
- Dry food that lasts: canned tuna, spam, peanuts.
- Bottled water
- Whiskey (medicinal)
- Even if you don't actually camp, there's times when it's really awesome to know you can.



# Riding Gear

- On small bikes at low speeds in hot climates, a full adventure riding kit with body armor etc is overkill, and uncomfortable.
- Small bike travel involves frequent stops and lots of walking around and exploring, which sucks in riding gear.
- Riding gear stands out like a sore thumb, because everyone else on the road is wearing street clothes.
  - Hiking shoes
  - Sturdy work pants
  - Comfortable non-cotton underwear & socks
  - Athletic shirts
  - Inexpensive WP/BR rain outerwear



# Travel Insurance

- In 2013, I was riding alone in a remote part of NE Honduras called the Mosquito Coast.
- I went over the handlebars and broke the Tib/Fib in my left leg. I was stuck there for 3 hours before I got picked up by a Honduran army truck.
- I spent three days on their base trying to get a plane ride. Finally I got two prop planes to take me to Roatan, and a medical jet to take me from there to Miami for surgery. After 5 days in the hospital there I got a commercial flight home.
- Total cost: ~\$190,000.
- Out of pocket cost: \$0 thanks to a \$200 travel insurance policy I'd purchased beforehand from Travelguard Chiartis.
- Don't get the trip cancellation insurance, only the health & medevac policy





# Luggage

- Mosko Moto Reckless 80 (of course!!)
- Reality:
  - Take whatever you can afford.
  - Don't let luggage, gear, or electronics screw up your travel budget.
  - A normal backpack, with garbage bag for rain, and rope to tie it down, will work just fine.



Questions?

