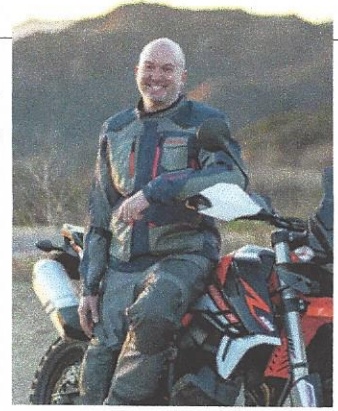


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Adventure Is Out There

Inspiration comes from unexpected places. The inspiration for this column came from *Up*, a 2009 Pixar animated film about an explorer named Charles Muntz and two children – Ellie and Carl – who idolize him. Early in the film, Ellie shares with Carl her dream of moving to Paradise Falls, South America, and convinces him to take her there in a blimp when they grow up. Then she repeats Muntz’s catchphrase: “Adventure is out there!”

Ellie and Carl eventually marry, and after Ellie suffers a miscarriage, they decide to save their money for a trip to Paradise Falls. The trip keeps getting put off, they grow old together, and Carl finally decides to plan the trip as a surprise. But before he can tell her, Ellie becomes ill and dies.

Up is the only movie that makes me cry within the first 10 minutes – every time I watch it. What tugs on the old heartstrings is a visceral sense of loss, and of dreams deferred and never realized. Adventure really is out there, but only if we make it happen.

The inspiration for *Rider*’s first adventure-themed issue was Dave Scott’s solo journey on the TransAmerica Trail. Dave is an old friend of mine, and I wrote about him in my “Riding Buddies” column in the August issue. Dave is a storyteller’s storyteller, someone with a remarkable recall for detail and a dramatic speaking style that brings any tale – short or tall – to life.

Last fall, Dave visited me in California for a few days. As we sat on my back patio drinking beers, Dave told me about the challenges and triumphs he experienced during his many weeks and thousands of miles on the TAT. The trip had been a dream of Dave’s, a unique way to see America. He had recently retired from a decades-long globetrotting career in the State Department, and he knew it was “now or never.”

Dave had invited me to join him on the trip, but I declined, offering up the usual excuses of having to work, pay bills, yada yada yada. Other friends demurred for similar reasons. Undeterred, Dave went on his own.

Since few of us will dedicate the time, money, and effort to complete a mostly off-road cross-country journey, I asked Dave to share his story in the pages of *Rider*. It took months of cajoling to get him to put his story on the page, and he ultimately sent me an 8,600-word epic that we had to condense considerably, but I think you’ll enjoy and appreciate Dave’s adventure.

While I was twisting Dave’s arm, a contribution came over the transom from Owen Howells, a photographer based in Wales. He sent some beautiful – and haunting – images

of his solo journey on the Albania portion of the Trans Euro Trail, a 32,000-mile network of off-road trails all over Europe that I didn’t even know existed. As Howells writes, the TET offers “a lifetime’s worth of riding.”

Then I received a story from a previous contributor, Trevor Denis, about his experience riding 900 miles of the Trans Canada Adventure Trail through Ontario with two friends.

One “Trans Trail” story is a feature, two is a section, and three is a theme. Before I knew it, an idea became a plan, and this adventure issue started to take shape. Caught up in the spirit, I penned this issue’s *Favorite Ride* about the White Rim Trail near Moab, Utah.

As we started working on this issue, we brought together a couple of adventure bikes for a local escape: a Honda CB500X (updated for 2022) and the recently launched Husqvarna Norden 901. I invited Kevin Duke, who is editor-in-chief at *American Rider*, to join me and photographer Kevin Wing on an overnight camping excursion.

Keeping the theme rolling, Eric Trow and Peter Jones agreed to write about adventure in their columns this month. And Jerry Lewis’ *Exhaust Note* provides sage advice for riding solo off-road.

Even though most of these stories involve dual-sport or adventure bikes with knobby tires and hundreds or thousands of miles ridden on dirt, gravel, mud, and sand, none of those are required for adventure. Sure, sales of adventure bikes have seen steady growth over the past decade or so, and they have proliferated in manufacturer lineups like mushrooms after a spring rain, but the same thing has happened with SUVs and crossovers in the four-wheeled world. People want the rugged versatility of a vehicle that can go off-road – or at least look like it can – even if they rarely or never do so.

Adventure, in my mind, is as simple as breaking out of your daily routine, even if just for a day or two, as with the short trip I took with my friend Kevin, and my other friend Kevin. Just riding a motorcycle – a vehicle scorned by the cager masses as a “donor” cycle – is an adventure. The wind, the heat, the cold, the noise, the vibrations – every part of the experience we hold dear, or at least willingly endure – are outside the zone of comfort and convenience for the vast majority of “normal” people.

However you define adventure, whatever adventures fill your dreams, make it happen. As John Lennon once said, “Life is what happens when you’re busy making other plans.” 🍷

Riding Solo Off-Road

CALL ME CRAZY, but in the past decade I've ridden solo for half of the TransAmerica Trail, three Backcountry Discover Routes (Colorado, Idaho, and New Mexico), the Oklahoma Adventure Trail, and the Lone Star Loop.

Motorcycle forums often have threads debating the pros and cons of riding solo off-road. Some think it's foolish; others think it's the only way to ride. When you're on your own in the backcountry, help may not be readily available if you need it. But there are also benefits to solo adventures – as long as you use some common sense.

Riding with like-minded friends is great, but the more riders, the more logistical complexity due to different schedules and preferences for meals, lodging, etc. Then there's the ride itself – when to get started each day, how far to ride, and where and when to stop. One of the key advantages of a solo ride is its simplicity. You're the boss. You're the only one who makes decisions (and has to live with them). Take breaks, take more photos, stop and smell the roses – it's up to you.

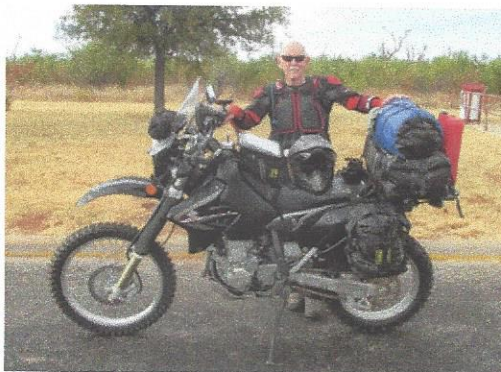
Another advantage for us older guys is that it beats not riding. For me, I either ride solo or I don't ride at all. I'm 75, and most of my friends have quit riding off-road for various reasons. And younger guys with jobs and families often don't have the flexibility to go for a ride on a Tuesday or to take a couple weeks off for a long trip.

Some would argue that you can't share the adventure with anyone if you ride alone. My solution is to take lots of photos and record descriptive audio notes on my smartphone throughout the day. Once back home, I convert these into a printed ride report to share with family and friends.

If you're thinking about riding solo off-road, here's some advice:

Communicate: You should always let people know where you will be riding, but that's not enough. You should also carry a Garmin inReach or SPOT satellite tracker/communicator that includes

two-way text messaging. Carry it on your person at all times since it won't do you any good if it's on your bike 50 feet down a ravine. Establish a periodic check-in routine via your mobile phone or tracker with those aware of your ride. Ask someone to periodically check your tracker "share page" with the understanding that if your last track point hasn't moved in a few hours and you haven't messaged, you probably need help. In addition, they should have the appropriate number to reach search and rescue.



The author with his adventure-kitted, battle-tested Suzuki DR-Z400 dual-sport.

Plan Your Route: Choose routes that are within your skill set. GPS tracks are great, but paper maps are good as a backup and to familiarize yourself with "bail out" routes. In case of an urgent situation, such routes provide the shortest path to pavement or nearby towns. Paper maps also give you the big picture, so during your ride, stop occasionally and figure out exactly where you are.

Ride the Right Bike: When riding solo off-road, it's critical that you're able to pick your bike up by yourself when (not if) you drop it. Most of us have seen demonstrations of 100-lb riders picking up 800-lb motorcycles by crouching down with their lower back against the seat, holding the handlebar and the rear fender, and "walking" the bike upright. It's a valuable technique to know and practice. In off-road situations, you may be in sand, gravel, or some other

challenging situation, so I also carry a strap that I can hook under the bike to adjust my lifting position. When you're off-road, a lighter motorcycle is always better in terms of maneuverability and the ability to pick it up, which you may have to do multiple times.

Your bike should also be well-maintained in terms of tires, chain, brakes, bolt tightness, lights, battery, fuel, cables, etc. Know your bike and how to troubleshoot common problems. Carry a comprehensive toolkit and be able to fix a flat. Even if you have a range of 200 miles, carry a RotoPax or other auxiliary fuel container.

Protect Yourself: Riding solo means ATGATT (All The Gear, All The Time). If you fall when you're alone, quality safety gear may determine whether you ride the bike out or are flown out in a helicopter (with a costly bike recovery). A good helmet, armored apparel, durable gloves, and adventure/off-road boots are necessities. Carry a hydration pack, extra snacks, sunscreen, a first-aid kit, and basic emergency supplies.

Ride Smart: Everyone's instinct for self-preservation has a different calibration, but when riding solo off-road it's better to err on the side of caution. If you come to a section and hear a warning bell in your head, consider turning around for an alternate track. Get a "Ride Right" sticker from RideBDR.com and make it standard practice. Riding far right on dirt roads, over hills, and around blind curves has saved me many times. Cover the front brake lever with at least one finger and practice emergency stops. Keep your mind focused on your ride and your speed appropriate for visibility. Obey rules and laws, stay off private roads, and slow down around houses and livestock.

Stuff Happens: What should you do if you get hurt or stranded? Don't panic! Assess and evaluate. Check for injuries, check the bike for rideability, consult your map, and weigh your options. Carefully consider: "Do I ride, do I walk, or do I wait?"

If you hanker for adventure and long to see what's over the next hill, a solo off-road ride may be just what you need. 🏍️