

A Letter From India: Part 1

In 2002 Ian Jurgens did a three week motorcycle trip across the Himalayas on a Mike Ferris, Ferriswheels trip. While he was away he sent back a series of emails. Here is the compiled collection of those emails."

Greetings All As some of you know I've packed up my bags and gone to India for a motorcycle trip in India. The hook for the trip is that you are riding Enfield Bullet motorcycles and that you travel on the worlds highest motorable roads then into Kashmir and back to Delhi. A few thoughts for you so far, please don't try to make sense of them.



ENFIELD MOTORCYCLES

A tricky beast to start riding why?

-Normal bike left foot is gears, right foot is rear brake, Enfield opposite way around.

- Normal bike is click gear lever up for higher gears, click lever down for lower gears, Enfield is opposite.

An Enfield comes standard with 4 gears and 17 false neutrals, My bike is special in that it has 3 gears and 50 false neutrals, I haven't found the 4th gear yet but I have found all the neutrals.

- A normal bike used 80% front brake and 20% rear brake for stopping, An Enfield uses 1% front brake and 99% rear brake. I.E. the front brake does nothing, zip, zilch, buggar all of bug-ger all, zero.

You realise this when a 20 people appear from nowhere in front of you and you jump on the gear lever and the front brake and nothing happens, except a quick detour onto the footpath. Exit Stage Left.

So all in all it's a steep learning curve on the first day. I have given my bike a pet name it's called "You Bastard" as in "Get into gear You Bastard" and "Stop You Bastard".

Road rules for India: Same as front brake on bike (see above) Mantra for Day 1 "Oh shit I'm gonna die"

Golden rule no 1: You can ride along OR look at the scenery if you try and do both, say along a stretch of relatively straight road with a car in the far distance.

A look any longer than a 1.2 microsecond at the valley below will mean that when you look back there will be a herd of cows on the road with a TATA truck (See below) overtaking the car that you saw so far away on the piece of tarmac that is only about half as wide enough for a TATA truck, cows, car and terrified foreign tourist on Enfield. Exit stage left required.

By day 2 The gear change problems have been sorted out (4 gears with matching number of false neutrals). I

have made friends with my Enfield and stopped calling it You Bastard Mantra for Day 2 "Don't get cocky, kid" (apologies to H Solo) The good thing about the bike is that it's easy to start, one kick and it runs, unlike Triumph Bonneville 1980 models. And they are tough with what they call roads around here, al-though when we do have good roads they are quite good they just don't happen all that often.



TATA Trucks

TATA trucks are the local big trucks around here. From what I understand TATA is Hindu for "Road God of Death to all Cars, People, other TATA trucks, Moped Riders and Especially Stu-pid Foreign Tourists Who Ride Motorcycles in India" This is a loose but accurate translation

Golden Rule MIGHT IS RIGHT ON THE ROAD. Do not forget this. TATA's will occupy both sides of the road if they feel like it, and they do. There may be no good reason for it. Or all of a sudden coming around a blind corner are two truck's passing each other. Exit stage left.



The weather is seriously hot and when we come to a town it's just bedlam again with traffic jams caused by TATA trucks, people, cows, cars all trying to use roads going through towns that were only designed to take donkeys and carts but we will be in snow in a couple of days time so the number of people and the temp will be

lower.

We have 9 people on the trip 8 from Oz and 1 Yank. They're all a good bunch. The age varies from 15 to 72. Two of the people are a mother and daughter who are especially brave as there is no way this little black duck would be taking a pillion around this part of the world.

Golden Rule: Murphy was an Indian, I say that because you can so careful about assuming that there is oil/sand/cars/truck/goats/people/cows around the next corner until you relax for one corner and all of the above will be there. Exit Stage Left.



Despite all my previous comments so far it's a great trip the scenery is stunning. The whole of this area is so green it's hard to believe you are in India. The riding despite my gripes is great fun I've never been over as many twisty bits in such a short space of time. The food is great, it's been 4 days and I haven't been sick yet, what more can I ask for?

We are having a rest/acclimatisation day as tomorrow we climb to over 4000 metres. So to aid this a few of us had one of the locals give us a massage to help those stressed muscles at \$8 for an hour's massage we were probably ripped off but it was damn good massage, I think he may have used sesame oil for part of it but beggars can't be choosers.

Unfortunately Bill had an accident yesterday and has broken a couple of ribs so he will be in the truck for a couple of days. Usually it's my role to fall off first.



To be continued : Part 2 in Octobers magazine