

# MOTORBIKE ADVENTURE

In March, Hong Kong-based corporate high-flier Morgan Parker, 38, embarked on a 125-day trek through 10 countries to his birthplace of Brisbane. In each country, he visited the charities supported by his non-profit organisation, Wheel2Wheel, while also filming a TV documentary.

Morgan on his BMW F800GS on the Donohue Highway near the NT/Qld border.



brother (who joined the Australian leg) suggested we detour on a technical off-road trail along the Finke River. Thanks to deep sand, relentless water crossings and extra-terrestrial rock formations, by 10pm we hadn't made it to the highway, I'd snapped my clutch lever and run out of fuel. We were battered and bruised. We camped overnight nearby the Aboriginal settlement of Hermannsburg.

● **In hindsight was there one thing you wish you had taken along?**

I carried six pieces of luggage weighing 70kg. These contained 25 smaller bags with a total inventory list of 175 items. I carried spare parts for the bike, clothing, food, photographic equipment, laptop and telecommunication equipment, medical supplies and official papers. Despite all the preparation, I still suffered hypothermia three times. I wish I'd taken warmer clothes.

● **Weirdest experience en route?**

Leaving behind the glitzy super modern Chinese mega-city of Guangzhou, then after one hour riding west, being back in the Stone Age, observing people live as they have for hundreds of years. It was like something out of *The Flintstones*.

● **Strangest thing you ate?**

In Laos I ate a bag of fried locusts for dinner. Suffice to say I lost 10kg during the first six weeks of the expedition.

● **What did you learn about humanity – and yourself?**

We're all the same, regardless of race, colour, religion or gender. As humans we share a bond of common destiny. The world's humanitarian challenges belong to us all. It's important we don't disassociate ourselves from these issues just because they're happening somewhere else. As for myself, I realised I'm stronger than I thought.

● **What did you miss most?**

My comfortable bed.

● **What did you most look forward to doing when you reached Brisbane?**

I went straight to see my 90-year-old grandmother, who was fighting for her life in hospital. I'm delighted to report she's still around today. 

A TV series about Morgan's ride starts on the Nat Geo Adventure channel on November 4.

● **How did you come up with the idea for the ride?**

During the global financial crisis I realised two things: (1) capitalism is spinning out of control, so instead of defining success by how much money I make, I decided to focus on how much difference I can make; and (2) urbanisation is destroying our sense of community, so I needed to break free of a regimented city life. During a 15-year career in Asia I've lived in seven countries but I wondered if I understood the region and its cultures. I started in Hong Kong and rode through China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, East Timor and Australia.

● **Tell us about the bike you chose.**

I was drawn to the sexy, futuristic lines of the BMW F800GS. A relatively nimble 180kg, it was perfectly suited to both the congested urban traffic and wide open off-road terrain. Then there's the reliability of German engineering, which was compelling given it was a solo adventure.

● **How did you prepare physically?**

I had a strict schedule to maintain throughout the 125 days, and the intersection with the film crew and charity in each country meant the tempo was more like a race. Strength endurance is key when riding 15-hour days over rocky terrain – plus

I knew at some stage I'd fall off the bike and need to pick it up. Working with a personal trainer, a former bodybuilder from California, we devised a six-day-a-week program. I increased my weight from 95kg to 103kg, while reducing body fat from 18 percent to 12 percent. To develop my cardiovascular capacity, I did altitude hikes in Australia and Japan, in addition to weekly treks through the mountains in Hong Kong. For flexibility, reflexes and self-defence, I practised Krav Maga twice a week.

● **Which days were the toughest?**

Every day in the saddle was tough. The road conditions, traffic and weather all played a part in fatiguing me. Day 16 was horrific sub-zero temperatures at altitude in the mountains of northern Laos, with horizontal rain hammering me for 15 hours as I negotiated 150km of mud, crashing 27 times. By the end, I was hypothermic. On Day 71, I took a big risk by trying to ride from Lake Toba in northern Sumatra to Jakarta, in Java. Locals said it would take three days but I was determined to do it in one hit. Riding like a man possessed, I completed the death-defying ride in 37 hours, narrowly escaping countless collisions. In Australia on Day 119, what should have been a leisurely journey from Yulara to Alice Springs ended up a nightmare when my