



FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO ADVENTURES 'R' US

BY ROB DINGMAN

The popularity of adventure motorcycling today is undeniable, and as the category continues to be the fastest-growing segment in motorcycling, it's rapidly become my favorite kind of riding.

My first bike was a 1989 Yamaha XT350. When I got it I was really more interested in off-road than street riding, but living just outside of Washington, D.C., I was too far from the closest riding area and didn't have a truck or a trailer to haul a proper dirt bike, so the most practical thing was a dual-sport.

Dual-sporting opened the door to street riding for me, as I found I rode that XT more on-road than off — and before I knew it I'd become more of a street rider than an off-roader. That led to the purchase of a bigger street bike (in addition to the XT, not as a replacement), and so the motorcycle addiction began. Eventually I graduated to a sport-tourer and then ultimately a Gold Wing. Since those XT days I've nearly always had a dual-sport in the garage, even if it was just a barely-street-legal dirt bike with a plate.

Not quite ten years ago, when adventure riding was really taking off, I bought a 2014 Triumph Tiger 800XC — and discovered the versatility of adventure bikes. Although not as comfortable as the 'Wing, I could still do long distances on the Tiger. But what I couldn't do on the Gold Wing was ride off road. Don't get me wrong; there are lots of places I love to ride my Husaberg FE450 where I wouldn't dream of riding my Tiger, but the Tiger is remarkably capable off-road, especially with the right tires.

I have ridden a number of AMA-sanctioned organized adventure

rides, and highly recommend participation in the Revzilla AMA National Adventure Riding Series. Until last year, most of my adventure riding had consisted of day trips or adventure rallies that start and return to the same point each day.

As you may have read about in our December 2022 issue, I finally got the opportunity to do a true, multi-day, point-to-point adventure ride. I rode the Mid-Atlantic Back Country Discovery Route with BDR President Tim James, BDR Co-Founder Bryce Stevens, BDR Ambassador Wendy Naessens, AMA Board Chair Russ Ehnes and AMA COO James Holter.

The ride was amazing, and I cannot say enough about the whole BDR experience. The BDR organization has mapped out amazing routes all over the country, with more being added all the time, and provides them free along with all manner of planning tools. You can learn more about Backcountry Discovery Routes online at ridebdr.com.

A great thing about adventure bikes is the nearly unlimited options for customizing. My bike has hard luggage (saddlebags and top box), engine and radiator guards, headlight protection, upgraded skid plate and hand guards, bar risers, an aftermarket windshield, and a throttle lock. I have also tried a variety of tires, always searching for the best traction off-road without sacrificing too much on-road grip.

I discovered on the MABDR trip that my hard bags were a bit bulky off-road and decided to replace them with soft panniers from AMA Member Benefit Partner Nelson Rigg. AMA members get an exclusive 20 percent discount from Nelson Rigg on all its products, making the bags I bought



My Triumph Tiger 800 is definitely not a lightweight dirtbike with lights, but it can get the job done off-road when necessary, especially with quality adventure-bike tires fitted.

incredibly affordable. They mounted easily to the racks I already had for my hard luggage. They look great, and I can't wait to try them out.

I also ordered a smaller windshield after going on that trip, as my 20-incher was a bit much off-road. On some day trips I've ridden without the shield, but on cold mornings it's nice to have some protection.

It is easy to see why adventure riding has grown so rapidly. My Tiger is suitable for long-distance trips on asphalt, but it's also versatile enough for the backcountry. I'm not planning to get rid of my dirt bike anytime soon, as I still enjoy riding trails that the Tiger would be a bit much on, but my Tiger can take me places that would have been less enjoyable on that XT350.

Adventure bikes have opened up so many more opportunities for fun on a motorcycle. I highly recommend checking them out!

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