



King of the road

EXTREME BIKE TOURS' DIRECTOR ZANDER COMBE INVITES YOU TO COME EXPLORE INDIA ON THE BACK OF A ROYAL ENFIELD BULLET, FOR SPECTACULAR VIEWS, FRIENDLY PEOPLE AND LOADS OF LAUGHS

WORDS | KATHRYN CLARK

What inspired you to start Extreme Bike Tours?

There is only one way to see India properly so that all your senses are alive, and that is on a motorbike. After coming to India in 1991 and buying a Royal Enfield Bullet I spent the next few years riding around the country, seeing all the cultures and meeting some of the friendliest people on the planet. After this, I met Vijay, India's number one mechanic, and we went on a journey over the Himalayas. It became obvious that we should allow people to tour with us – Extreme Bike Tours was born.

What is your favourite route in India?

Every bike route in India is different and each tour offers an eclectic mix of food, cultures, scenery and adventures. I like high altitudes, pitching man against the elements, so my favourites are the Mighty Himalayan 1 and Mighty Himalayan 2 routes. They feature every road condition on the planet. Our team is wonderful – they make me and our customers laugh. We have the best time.

What's the most memorable thing you've seen on your India trips?

The best thing about these tours is seeing our customers' faces as they cruise around India. Seeing their shoulders drop from stress relief; and being gob-smacked by India in general. I have also seen some interesting things like an elephant in the back of a truck, and I was also charged by an elephant in south India.

What can people expect on an Extreme Bike Tour?

We offer an adventure that you can talk about around the dinner table for years to come. Customers can visit the mighty Himalayas, riding a 1958 Royal Enfield Bullet; experience five-star luxury on our Rajasthan and south India tours; and visit Lhasa and Everest on our Tibet tour. The one thing that is always the same is good company, lots of laughs and a view into these amazing cultures.

How was working with Top Gear?

The *Top Gear* filming was an incredibly interesting piece of work. We were organising some of the logistics and locations, starting in Rajasthan and continuing into the end of the production in the Himalayas. It was amazing to see how the highest grossing

BBC programme works behind the scenes. It was, however, extremely hard work to ensure that everything was ready for each leg of the shoot. We did this on the move, heading through India with the three star cars. No mean feat. But everything is possible in India.

What are your plans for 2013?

We are introducing a new fleet: Royal Enfield 500cc Desert Storms, which will be used on our Rajasthan, south India and Bhutan tours. The fleet of original 500cc Bullets will be used on our Tibet, Mighty Himalayan 1 and Mighty Himalayan 2 tours. We also are introducing two five-star tours: one in south India and one in Rajasthan. We love what we do, ensuring our customers have a great experience.

What item do you never leave home without?

I love this question! I would never leave without my good friend and head mechanic Vijay. He is a barrel of laughs and can fix bikes at any time in Formula 1-style pit crew fashion. He has more of an English sense of humour than I do. Apart from Vijay, my Swiss army knife: you can fix anything with that. ☺