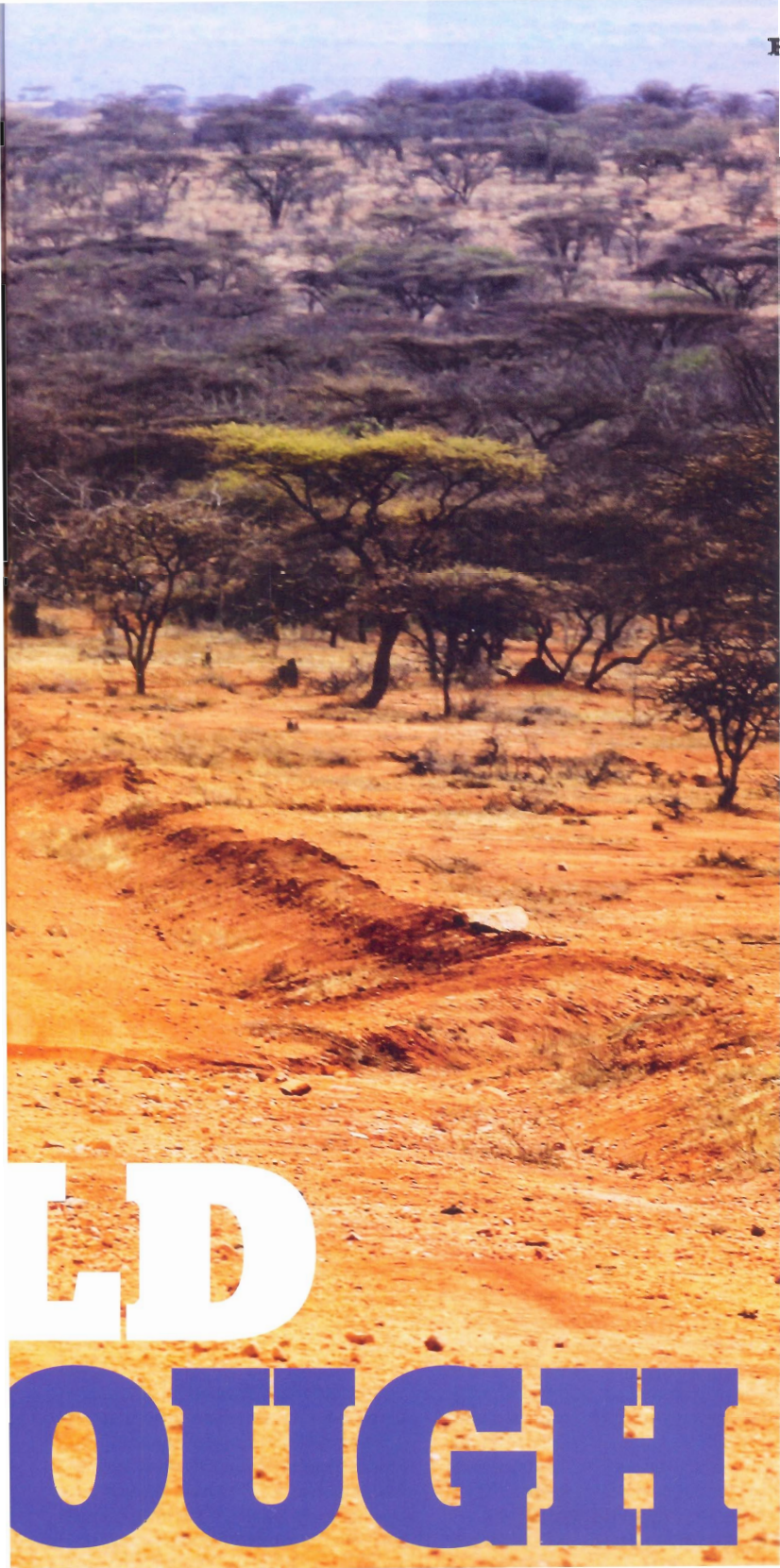


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HORIZONS UNLIMITED

Those who've circumnavigated the globe come together each year to encourage more of us to get out and do it ourselves. We look at Horizons Unlimited, the team that organises those meetings, and discover three stories of inspiration

STORY: JUSTIN LAW

This year, Australia hosts three Horizons Unlimited meetings, the first time the globetrotter organisation has held more than one here. According to volunteer organiser Shane Kuhl, it means interest in riding around the world is growing — not just here, but in many other countries where meetings are held.

Created in 1997 by Canadian couple Grant and Susan Johnson, who started their own epic and ongoing journey through 50 countries in the late '80s on a modified BMW R80G/S that had literally fallen off the back of a truck, Horizons Unlimited has developed into the one-stop event to find out all you'll ever need to know about how to do it.

"The meetings are there to inspire and educate, so we have a series of speakers who talk about their experiences and are there to answer questions," Shane says.

Shane became involved after the Queensland-based IT tech was asked to help with a computer presentation at a Horizons Unlimited meeting three years ▶

"No, I don't use a GPS. When I get up in the morning I just head towards the sun and keep going that way"

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HORIZONS UNLIMITED



- ◆ Luggage solutions are a big part of the Horizons Unlimited meetings
- ◆ Riders happily inform the crowd about how they prepared for their trips. Dayboro organiser Shane Kuhl is in the foreground under the Akubra
- ◆ Sharing stories is what it's all about, with people gaining confidence to take on their own adventures after talking with those who've done it



ago. He got hooked on the information, was inspired by the stories, and took on the responsibility of helping to organise the meetings at Dayboro in Queensland.

"The meetings happen at a showground with presentations on first aid or changing tyres on the road, photography on the road, how to pick up a bike, bike maintenance, cooking, camping, riding skills, how to manage money, travel visas etc" he adds. "You learn how to do everything, like how to make your own bike crate to have your bike shipped overseas, or how to go about travelling to another country, buying a bike and selling it at the end. It's an

informal seminar on how to get off your butt and get out there."

Those who attend the meetings to educate bring their tales of inspiration and what sparked their interest — whether it's a book about an epic trek or a meeting with a traveller, or a simple urge to scratch an itch. And there can be no discounting the fact that Charley Boorman and Ewan McGregor brought the concept of global motorcycle travel into the frontal lobe with the *Long Way Round* series and book nine years ago.

Shane mentions the "Charley and Ewan thing" as he talks about Horizons Unlimited, although he says there's

HORIZONS UNLIMITED ONLINE

Check out www.horizonsunlimited.com for an absolute treasure trove of information and useful tools for the aspiring world traveller.

You'll find detailed information on how to prepare your bike for the long trip, how to budget and what expenses you can expect, how to get travel visas and transport your bike to different places, and there's even a translation chart for common bike terms in a multitude of different languages.

The main aim of the website is to bring together those who have travelled with those who want to, and the forums are well populated and organised into various topics covering pretty much everything you could think to ask about going around the world.

There are also links to blogs, stories and websites created by people who have been there and done that, along with information about upcoming meetings.

special respect for those who've travelled alone. "We've had people who have ridden to Sydney from Darwin via the Arctic Circle, but one of the most inspiring ones for me was one fellow rode a Honda Transalp from Ireland to Sydney on his own in 2010," he says. "He was a mechanic on the GP circuit and picked up a Transalp for \$600, rode the bike to Australia and sold the bike for \$600. He

- ➔ You don't need an adventure bike to have an adventure! This Ural outfit has seen plenty of action
- ➔ Female riders make up half of those who attend the meetings

was so practical and there was no extra assistance — when he was in Mongolia travelling east, he passed two guys on BMWs with GPSs and they asked if he had one. He said 'No, I don't use one. When I get up in the morning I just head towards the sun and keep going that way.'

These travellers come to the Horizons Unlimited meetings sometimes to give a presentation on their trip, sometimes to hold a seminar on a particular aspect of preparation, or simply to mingle with the hundreds who attend and answer questions.

"About 25 per cent of people who attend just want to dip their toe in the water and see what it's all about, then about 50 per cent have done a bit of travel, while the last 25 per cent are the hardcore travellers who've invested to allow them to travel six months of the year or made a business out of it," Shayne says. "A lot of the questions they ask during the presentation centre around costs, others focussing on personal safety when travelling in countries that have got a bad rap in the media; generally when you're travelling on a motorcycle, people will help you and are pleased that you're in their country looking around. There are other questions about bike maintenance and what sort of spares you should take, but there are also simple questions like how often to lube the chain."

Unsurprisingly, the ratio of women to men is 50:50, but Shane says gender is not even an issue at the meetings. "It doesn't come up as being unusual or anything," he says. "There's a special women-only seminar on things that are important for women to know when travelling alone, but aside from that the meetings are very gender-neutral."

Supporting the three-day meetings is the Horizons Unlimited website, which provides a lot of useful information on how to get started, stories of inspiration, and a forum where people can chat about their experiences. However, the meetings, which anyone can attend, are where it all happens in person and this year there will be opportunities to quiz intrepid travellers in Queensland, Victoria and Perth.

"If you've got an itch to travel, then this is how to scratch it," says Shane. ►



THE AUSTRALIAN MEETINGS

There are Horizons Unlimited meetings in three corners of Australia this year, kicking off with the traditional Dayboro, Queensland, get-together on 26–29 September. HU founders Grant and Susan Johnson will be there, along with Peter and Kay Forwood, who'll talk about how they've visited 193 countries on a Harley, making it the world's most travelled motorcycle.

Colin and Dee Masters travelled to Australia on a BMW R1150GS in 2006 and will be at Dayboro to talk about their rides through Europe, Africa and India, while Globetrekters Paul and Jan Dwyer present "Africa: How to argue from Nairobi to Cape Town".

Solo riders include Richard Winter and Linda Boothstone-Bick, who celebrated her 60th birthday during her around-the-world trek.

Jackson Allan explains how to film your adventure on any budget and Grant Johnson shows how to change a tyre and teaches motorcycle ergonomics.

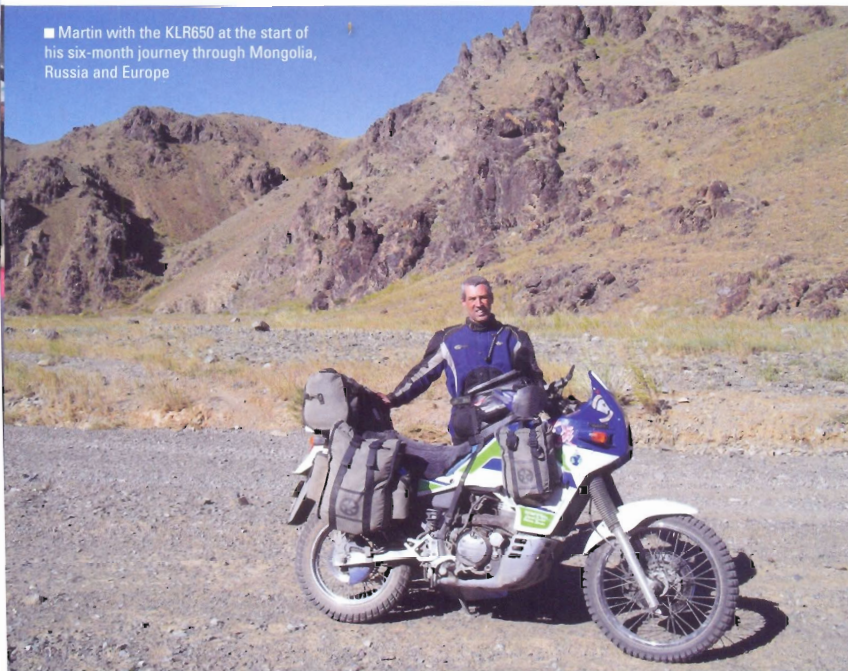
In Cavendish, Victoria, on 11–13 October, HU will do it all again, with Geoff Bransbury talking about his 26,000 kilometres through the Americas at 67 years of age, and Jacqui Kennedy proving you can dare to be different by doing her trip on a scooter. "I love seeing the disbelief on riders' faces when you get to the top of the Stelvio Pass on 'that thing'," she says.

Brian and Shirley Hardy-Rix did 83,000 kilometres through six continents ("Well, the bike didn't get to Antarctica, but we did!") and the Johnsons will be there to explain how their 11-year odyssey began.

HU then appears in Perth, WA, on 19–20 October. Keep an eye on the website for updates on who will be appearing there.

HORIZONS UNLIMITED

■ Martin with the KLR650 at the start of his six-month journey through Mongolia, Russia and Europe



SOLO ACROSS SIBERIA

When the kids had grown, Martin Williams rediscovered a long-suppressed urge to travel and took on Mongolia, Russia, and a wintry Europe on his KLR650

Travelling solo through northern Asia and Europe was an unforgettable experience for shipping engineer Martin Williams, one that affirmed his faith in human nature. "What I've learned about people over the years is that they're universally good," he says. "There are very few arseholes in the world and you can't judge people by their looks. I made that mistake a few times. In Russia, the biker clubs are full of amazing people, but you look at them and think, 'Ooh, I wouldn't like to meet them in a dark alley.' In actual fact they are so hospitable — they put you up and pass you on to their mates in the next town. The only problem is you end up drinking far too much vodka."

That experience came after Martin reignited his passion for travel and a desire to take on the around-the-world trip that had started in his university days. "I read Ted Simon's book *Jupiter's Travels* when I was back at uni and had the idea then, so I travelled around

Australia on my bike and that was the start of it," he says. "After that, I got married, had kids, all the rest of the things that happen to people that slow you down, but then the kids grew up, the marriage disappeared and I thought, wow, I can do this again."

"I went up to the Horizons Unlimited meeting in Queensland in 2010 with the vague idea that I wanted to travel. Up there people were talking and they were normal people; you always think they're superheroes. There are people there who do fantastic things, like Peter and Kay Forwood, who have been to every country in the world — they're a pretty amazing couple, but most people you talk to are average Joes. They've fitted it in with other commitments in life and not with the flashiest equipment, so I thought, well, it can be done."

Martin did his sums and set his sights on Russia, a country he'd always wanted to visit, and after attending a second HU meeting in 2011, he made it happen on a Kawasaki KLR650. "The KLR was a \$2000 bike and as simple and tough as they come," he says. "My theory was that if it died in the middle of nowhere, it was cheap enough to walk away from without any real problems or regrets. That made life nice and simple. I couldn't imagine travelling on a \$25,000 bike because you can't insure it and you'd

"The kids grew up, the marriage disappeared and I thought, wow, I can do this"

■ The shifting sands of the Gobi Desert without any discernible track to follow





- ↑ The snow in St Petersburg: a contrast to the desert sands
- ➡ The main restaurant on the dirt road halfway between Altai and Khovd in southern Mongolia
- ⚡ The KLR650 fully loaded — lightweight and cheap

forever be panicking about it, and if it did break down, it'd be a nightmare to get it shipped somewhere or find parts for it."

HU was useful in determining how to get the bike to the starting point in Russia and then he set off on his six-month odyssey with only a simple idea on how it was going to pan out. "Some people plan exactly where they're going to be every day and have detailed itineraries," he says. "Mine was: Leave Vladivostok, head west, arrive in the UK. That just stopped putting me under pressure."

For accommodation, Martin says he spent one third wild camping in a small tent off the side of the road, one third in cheap hostels or truck stops, and one third in hotels. With fuel, his daily expense averaged out to \$100 a day.

"It wasn't particularly hard to find food or fuel," he says. "The fuel works on a pre-paid system where you go up to a grill in a wall and tell them how many litres you want — in Russian, of course. You then hand over the correct amount of money and they switch on the pump and it delivers the fuel into your tank. With the older pumps, they don't have a cut-off so if you say you want 10 litres, you'd better have room, because if you don't, it will spill out over your bike. I found that out the hard way."

His kit was a tent, sleeping bag, a stove, toolkit, clothes. "I had three pairs of underpants, two trousers, two T-shirts, a sweater, a down jacket for when it got cold and bike gear. You do tend to wash regularly."

But personal hygiene was for nobody else's benefit; Martin was deliberately



keen to travel solo. "I like travelling by myself because it gives you more interaction with other people. People come up to you and talk to you when you're by yourself, but when you're in a couple or with other people, it's assumed you're okay, you've got each other."

The travel bug bites hard and Martin is not immune; he is already planning another trip, this time to Africa, having quizzed others who have experienced it firsthand.

"I haven't worked out if I'm going to

the east or west coast, I just want to meet people and see the countryside. I've never been to Africa," he says. "It's also about facing my own fears about travelling in Africa — you see things on the news that don't look good, but then you end up talking to people and everybody says it's fantastic, so those fears have disappeared."

To learn more about Martin and his 2011 trek, including a full rundown of his expenses, visit awayonmybike.adventureriders.com.au. ►

HORIZONS UNLIMITED

■ Jan and Paul Dwyer and the spectacular views in northern Kenya



OUT OF AFRICA

For motorcycling newcomer Jan Dwyer, there was no way she was missing out on the trip of a lifetime through Africa with her husband Paul, even if it did involve a close encounter with a lion

“We got to a campsite in Botswana and asked if there were any lions around because we’d been hearing lions the last couple of nights,” Jan Dwyer says of the only time she felt in danger during her and Paul’s African adventure. “They said the lions were far away and not to worry about them. It was a beautiful evening, the moon was up and it was so peaceful, and we went to bed thinking it was wonderful and that we’d have a great night. At about one o’clock in the morning there was this

almighty roar right outside our tent. This bloody big male just went off his head.

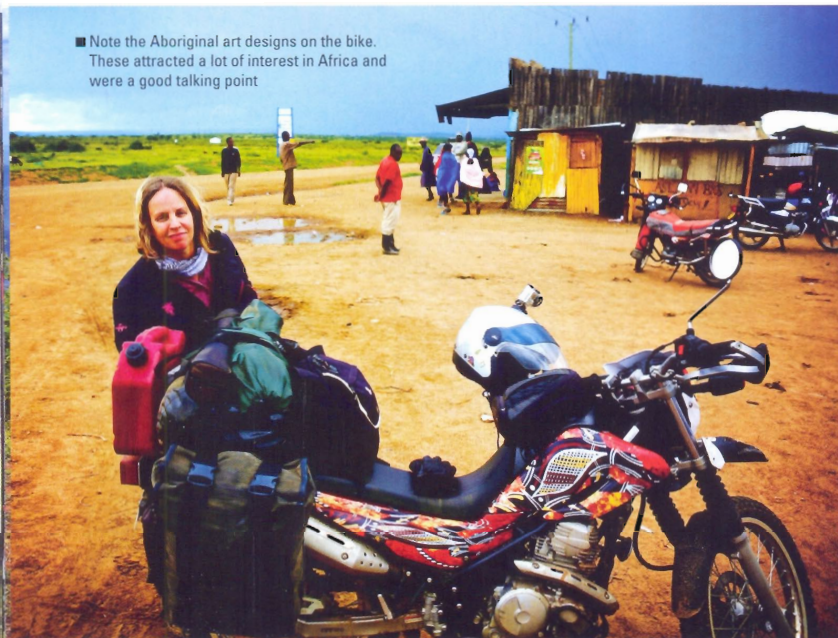
“I tell you what, Paul said he could see my heart pounding in my chest and was more frightened I was going to have a heart attack. If you’ve ever heard a lion roar in the wild, they are so loud and the sound just resonates through your whole body. It sat there for about three minutes maybe and had the zebras running off — we were worried we were going to get trampled, but they’d run off in the other direction — and we could hear him panting. Then there was silence and we didn’t know where he’d gone until about ▶



↑ Jan with Samburu tribesmen in Kenya

“There was this almighty roar right outside our tent. This bloody big lion just went off his head”

HORIZONS UNLIMITED



■ Note the Aboriginal art designs on the bike. These attracted a lot of interest in Africa and were a good talking point



■ Despite the firearms, Jan says she never felt threatened

20 minutes later, when we heard him further away.”

The story came in response to the question most people ask about travelling through Africa: do you feel threatened? The basis of the question is the misapprehension about the troubles that are played out in the media, but Jan says there's little to be worried about.

“I was never nervous with the people in Africa,” she says. “We were always asked if we ever felt in danger but we

never felt threatened. The only time was with the wildlife — with lions, hyenas and hippos.”

The trip itself was Jan's first real big travel experience on a motorcycle. Paul had been riding for years and travelled extensively through Europe, and they decided Africa was the best place to start their world trip.

They chose a Yamaha XT250 for Jan because of its lightness and, more than anything else, because Jan

worried a heavier bike would have been problematic in some of the small villages they'd pass through.

“I wasn't a very experienced rider and I needed that for my confidence as well,” she says. “You ride through a lot of villages in Africa and there are people, camels, carts and donkeys everywhere; I kept imagining my foot slipping on a heavier bike and how I would skittle about to people and dogs and donkeys and get strung up in a tree by an angry mob or something. My imagination was running rife.”

The bike was modified, with the forks raised through the headstock and the seat padding cut down enough for Jan to get the balls of her feet on the ground. With that sorted, she and Paul headed to Cairo in September 2010 to start their African adventure together.

Married for 23 years and in business together, Jan says they have a strong relationship that's built on friendship, but admits that travelling together isn't always easy. “It's been challenging for us because you live in each other's pockets — it's not like home when you can go out on your own for a bit, or go visit a friend for a bit of a break. When you're out on the road you have to stay together because that is part of your safety.

“We were going through Namibia and had a particularly hard time. I was extremely tired and against my better judgement I decided we'd do this road after I'd heard conflicting stories about it — some people said it was easy and others said it was quite tough. Well, I thought we'd come this far so we'll do it. Now, I don't like dirt roads and I hate gravel, and there was quite a lot of gravel and sand. Paul tends to take those things in his stride, whereas I think about the road conditions, and as the day wore on I was getting quite frustrated and it was very hot.

“At one point I pulled up and I was so angry with him. I hated him and I said to him, ‘Have you got any idea how much I hate you right now?’ Every bit of that feeling came out, and I even considered leaving the bike on the side of the road, but pride got the better of me. I had come this far and I couldn't give up because of a bit of gravel. Anyway, we are close enough to know that it was a moment thing and thankfully we got over it. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger and it certainly didn't kill me, so if I was to go back there I would tackle it differently, but I'd have that experience under my belt.” ▶



A LIFE ON THE ROAD

For 35 years, Haydn and Dianne Durnell have travelled together to all parts of the globe. Their biggest adventure was enjoying the comfort of a Harley for a story on doing it in style

Haydn Durnell admits not everyone at the Horizons Unlimited meetings agrees that a Harley-Davidson Electra Glide is the way to go when doing extended travel. "We attended the Horizons Unlimited Australian meeting in 2003 and there were a few sniggers about the Harley," Haydn says. "But after enjoying Peter and Kay Forwood's company for a few days, as well as Ken and Carol Duval, and grilling both of them on their adventures, we believed the Harley was the right choice for the two of us on a trip such as this."

They felt vindicated after a 10-month journey through North, Central and South America in 2004/05. It was a highlight of years on the road together,

their journey starting in their native Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) when they travelled to the United Kingdom as young adventurers in 1977.

"The day after we arrived, we bought



- ↑ Picnicking on the side of the road in the USA, 1980
- ↓ Young, keen and unprepared for the UK weather in 1977 on the XT500 single
- ◆ Camping in Europe with the XS750 triple in 1978

a Yamaha XT500," Haydn says. "In the then Rhodesia, because of sanctions, we had been limited to 125cc dirt bikes, so the prospect of a big-bore single was too good to pass up. Plus it was cheaper than a proper road bike. We toured England, Wales and Scotland before embarking on Europe and all up





“We were young and naive and rugged too, I suppose. Also we didn’t know any better”

did about 16,000 kilometres on that XT. We were young and naive and rugged too, I suppose. We also didn’t know any better. Our riding gear was, in hindsight, totally inappropriate and at least half our travelling was in the rain and cold, despite it apparently being summer.”

The next adventure was through Europe, having upgraded to a Yamaha XS750, and then in the late ’70s, with Rhodesia becoming Zimbabwe amid violent guerrilla warfare, the Durnells set their sights on Australia, choosing to travel while waiting the three years to meet immigration requirements.

“It was 1980 and acceptance into Australia was close. But for me, I had to see the USA before finally settling down, as I knew I must when we eventually did get to Australia,” Haydn says. “We had

- ↑ Riding over the Rockies, USA, 1989
- Along the spectacular Karakoram Highway in Pakistan in 2008
- ➔ It got cold in Europe! The XS1100 snowbound

one more trip in us so we flew out on a discounted Freddy Laker flight (who can remember those?) for New York City. I’d done better research on an appropriate bike and our gear was also more suitable now. The day after we arrived in NY City, we rode out on our Yamaha XS1100. We had a wonderful and memorable six months touring the USA, Canada and a small bit of Mexico, before learning that our application to migrate to Australia had been accepted.”

Life intervened for the next 15 years as the Durnells worked and raised their two children. Haydn rode as a commuter rather than an adventurer, until he sat on a Harley-Davidson while waiting in a bike showroom for a dirt bike for his son. “That was it, the moment and the instant that rekindled our need for motorcycling adventures,” he says. “We sold the aging XS and Dianne bought me a Harley for my 40th birthday. That bike and the HOG (Harley Owners Group) fraternity changed our lives and put us back on course.”

In the 10-year leadup to their 2004/05 Americas odyssey, they had clocked up 200,000 kilometres on Harley-Davidsons, adding another 24,000 to that over the following 10 months. The couple has since travelled through South-East Asia and Central Asia to Europe — those times on BMW’s R1200GS — and are regular Horizons Unlimited guests.

Each of Haydn and Dianne Durnell’s trips are detailed at www.wanderlust04.com with plenty of great photos along with a diary of their adventures. **ARR**