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AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY HOURS...

ON A YZF-R125!

What seemed like a comical idea soon descends into 1,139 miles of misery, cross-dressing, bestiality and jingoism as we circumnavigate the globe on a 125 without actually leaving Blighty...

Standing behind the road sign for Wellington at the side of a busy dual carriageway with my trousers around my ankles and an inflatable sheep clutched to my crotch, I can't help but think this isn't quite what I anticipated from a career in bike journalism.

Then, in the distance, I hear the approaching rumble of V-twin engines as about twenty Harleys cruise into view. Seeing a fellow biker they start to wave a greeting, only for their arms to drop as they take in the full horror of the sight in front of them. Trying to make the best of a bad situation I raise a hand in acknowledgement, then it dawns on me; with one arm cocked in the air it looks like I'm simply 'getting into the moment' even more with Flossy, rather than the cheery 'hello' I was going for.

Some ideas are best left locked in a little section of your brain marked 'not for use.' Ideas that are so stupid most ordinary people would simply file them without a second thought. Unfortunately my brain has lost the key to the lock on this door, and as a consequence I seem to end up in all manner of horrific and degrading situations that, nine times out of ten, involve a camera.

This is another of those cases, so before I go any further I would like to take this opportunity to apologise to any Australians, New Zealanders, Americans, Canadians, Egyptians, and

any other countries I might offend in this piece - with the exception of the French. I don't mind too much if I offend them. I'd also like to apologise to my parents, I'm sure they didn't anticipate that the money they spent on my education would lead to this.

Anyway, back to the story. Unlike Jules Verne's fictional character Phileas Fogg, my unfortunately all-too-real adventure failed to get off to such a salubrious start. Fogg embarked on his epic journey from his Pall Mall gentleman's club, with his trusty manservant Passepartout at his side, after a bet with a fellow toff. I, on the other hand, got pissed in a Wetherspoons in Croydon, came up with a stupid idea and set off with a Yamaha YZF-R125 as my companion.

Two stories at polar ends of the spectrum of life, but with a common goal, to circumnavigate the world in the fastest time possible, although I wasn't actually leaving the UK...

DAY ONE CALIFORNIA DREAMING TO THE DREARY REALITY OF GREENLAND

Wheeling Rigodon (seeing as we were going to be spending so much time together I re-named the Yamaha after the manservant in the 1980s cartoon 'Around the World With Willy Fog') out of my garage I was struck by two things. Firstly he was indeed a very small chap, and secondly he appeared to be devoid of any luggage carrying capacity. Ok, I know he's only a 125, but those hooks on the pillion pegs are so inviting for attaching

There really aren't any words that can accompany an image like this - other than a simple 'Sorry'

California holiday parks
California



bungee cords to, why haven't Yamaha added another set at the back end of the bike? As a result I affixed my combination of tie down straps, cable ties and gaffa tape. At this point it be a miracle if it didn't work lose and hurl itself into the bike's back wheel - which could prove a welcome relief. Then, with my GPS 'securely' gaffa taped onto the bike's bars (fouling the steering lock slightly), I typed in my first destination: California... Norfolk. There was a slight pause as it calculated a route then the message

boredom. For the last 100 miles all I have had to amuse me is the monotone drone of Rigodon's tiny piston thrashing up and down in its single cylinder, and a speedo showing a mind-numbing 63mph. Remarkably, comfort hasn't been an issue, despite looking all sporty the Yamaha is surprisingly

“I'M LOCKED IN A WORLD OF IMPENETRABLE BOREDOM”

161.4 miles flicked up on the screen. Bollocks. A quick mental calculation, assuming Rigodon's top speed to be 65mph, and I was looking at about three hours solid riding. Double showing 6,000rpm and a bit of clutch-slip to help get my 14-stone, 6'2" frame on the go, we set off on our adventure, very quietly and with quite possibly the gayest exhaust note ever. Two hours later and I'm starting to suffer from 'cabin fever', but rather than going mad from being trapped in a confined space, I'm locked in an isolating world of utter, impenetrable,

accommodating, even for a large lad like myself, but the tedium is getting to me. On a big bike you can amuse yourself by playing with your speed, but on a 125 you don't have this luxury. It's all or nothing. Shutting the throttle knocks a crucial 5mph off the speedo, and it takes miles to regain this lost momentum, something I'm not prepared to do. I'm turning into a psychotic, mph crazed, maniac on the road, desperately searching out any opportunity to keep my speed up, and refusing to back down in the face of much more imposing traffic.

OTHER IDIOTIC TRIPS AROUND THE WORLD...

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT THESE MUPPETS ACTUALLY WENT ABROAD! MENTALISTS.

Dave Kunst was the first person to walk the 14,450 miles around the world. Unfortunately his brother, who was on the trip with him, didn't make it, he was shot dead by bandits in Afghanistan.

Scotsman Mark Beaumont cycled around the world in 195 days and six hours in 2008, beating the previous record of 276 days.

Seventeen year old Zac Sunderland from America became the youngest person to sail solo around the world in 2009. It took him 13-months. His bed sheets must have been like cardboard when he returned...

Round the world motorcycling mentalist Nick Sanders first completed the trip in 1992 on an Enfield Bullet. A far more impressive achievement than doing it in 19 days on an R1!



Some believe that the hair and ears are actually Jon's

when you are standing next to a signpost in your underpants wearing a muscle-man costume. Well what else is California famous for? I didn't want to squeeze into a red Baywatch bikini with my bollocks flapping around in the breeze (although to be honest after 160-miles on a 125 in the cold they had retracted past my kidneys) and the fancy dress shop was out of it was! With the humiliation of a picture over I remounted Rigodon and headed inland to my next destination, Gibraltar...Lincolnshire.

At this point it occurred to me I hadn't given the little chap a drink yet, and with nearly 200 miles showing on his odometer and the fuel gauge only showing one bar by the time we passed King's Lynn I stopped at a petrol station. A whopping £11.25 later he was full up, despite being thrashed for the last 200 miles he was averaging nearly 100 miles per gallon, which is staggering and a fact that kept me amused for almost a whole mile...

Thankfully, following the A52 up to Skegness was a little less dull than the dual carriageway that lead to California. Sweeping past the fields of cabbages (I had no idea this area was

the UK's cabbage belt) Rigodon was getting into his stride, hitting dizzying speeds of almost 72mph on some sections, and proving more than capable in any corners, but overtaking was now an issue. Anyone who has ridden a slow bike will know the problems you encounter when the overtaking on A-roads. As most of the traffic was travelling at 60mph-ish, overtakes took approximately half a mile and often left you hung out to dry should another vehicle approach from the other direction. Crawling past cars, with their occupants staring at me, I felt like God had hit the slow motion button on life's great video player. Then Skeggy appeared on the horizon. Gibraltar Point is a nature reserve just below Skegness. There are no monkeys there and to be honest it's all a little dull unless you are into Cowslips, Little Terns and the occasional Shag (not the good kind, although the car park looks a very probable dogging location). Rigodon and myself hightailed it out of there before any seagull action could spoil

his paint scheme and headed towards Jerusalem...Lincolnshire. This is the one I didn't believe existed. What the hell was Jerusalem doing in England's green and pleasant land? Well it was here, and from what I could work out it consisted of about three houses and a bin. Maybe the countenance had divided over it and anyway, the sun wasn't shining forth, I was tired and I needed to get to Greenland before dark.

Despite being clearly marked on the map, no one had seemed fit to alert the locals of Sheffield that Greenland existed. "No, that's never been here," one told me, "and I've lived here 40 years." It appeared I had just added 100 extra miles onto my trip to visit an industrial area of Sheffield. Arse. Keen to put a brave face on it I donned my hat and started posing next to the sign for Greenland Road, which is when the police turned up. "Are you here for the Cliff Richard concert?" the officer enquired, somewhat improbably. "Err, yes," I replied, standing there

with a stupid hat on and a camera in my hand. "Ok," and with that he was off. Is a furry lumberjack hat standard attire for a fan? Unwilling to ponder this any more I pointed Rigodon towards the M1 and Castle Donington, our home for the night. I'd covered 451 miles in 14 hours and my wrists felt like I'd done most of them in a handstand.

“I STARTED POSING - WHICH IS WHEN THE POLICE TURNED UP”

DAY TWO FROM FANTASY TO GRIMY REALITY

Rising early on day two I checked with some optimism to see if Rigodon had been stolen overnight, disappointingly he hadn't. Our first stop was a mere five miles away, so nothing to worry about. Melbourne, as I'm sure many of you will know, is a corner at Donington Park circuit, but it is also a small village just outside the track. It looks quite pretty but I reckon the average age of its inhabitants is dead. So I headed off to find one of my childhood heroes. No, not Jimmy Savile - Batman. And where else could he be but Gotham? It's funny, but Gotham looks bigger on TV. In fact I suspect that this Gotham,



More Batty Man than Batman - Robin is out of shot, thankfully



which is located about ten miles from Donington, isn't really a city at all and looks more like the kind of place the almost see Batty and The Joker waving speed through its streets on mobility scooters. But we had no time to ponder such frivolities, the world was our

oyster and we had to set our sails and head into the unknown and murky waters of Bermuda... Warwickshire. This is where it all gets a bit odd because, believe it or not, I had a hell of a struggle locating Bermuda. The GPS couldn't get a fix and it was almost as if it



Rarely has such a happy man looked so sad. We almost feel guilty for making him do it...



Er. 'Sorry.' Again...



had dropped off the map. All very odd. After about half an hour of circling a trading estate, during which time I have to complement the Yamaha on its excellent steering lock, feather light clutch and low seat height that made the numerous U-turns simple, I eventually located a walking fountain of knowledge, or Postie as they are also called. He directed me down the tiny alleyway, and we popped out the other side in Bermuda Village. Mission accomplished, all that was left for the day was to pop to Wellington, just outside Leominster.

To be honest I don't want to talk too much about 'the Wellington incident.' Myself, and those twenty Harley riders, are still in therapy about it and Flossy

is still feeling deflated. The YZF-R125 was doing well though, and was great fun along the wonderfully twisty A44, providing the highlight to an otherwise humiliating and degrading day.

Keen to back out of Wellington as soon as possible I set a new record of 39miles without closing the throttle, and a top speed of 83mph. Rigodon's odometer now read 813miles, and my arse was flatter than a witch's tit.

DAY THREE A FINAL PUSH LEADS TO THE WORLD'S END...

Waking up on day three of this adventure, in all honesty the last thing I wanted to see was that bloody bike again. Over 800 miles in two days is a hard graft on any machine, on a 125 it's

akin to torture. Not because of the level of discomfort, but the sheer tedium of sub-65mph locomotion. But this was the final push, and by now I had become hardened to it by training my mind to think of other things, such as the meaning of life and which bodypart I would happily cut off to shag a member of Girls Allowed (not including the ginger one, obviously).

Pointing Rigodon towards Brighton I'm sorely tempted to tape the throttle open and launch him Quadrophenia-swing right and ride into Washington, before following the A27 along the coast and past Southampton to Canada, a village disappointingly Moose free, apart from the three local girls...

MY SPIRITS WERE BROKE; MY ARSE PUMMELED INTO SUBMISSION

The finish line is now tantalisingly in sight and we retrace our steps and head up the A3 towards London, stopping to take in Normandy where the locals put up surprisingly little resistance to our invasion and finally zipping around the M25 and up the M40 to Egypt.

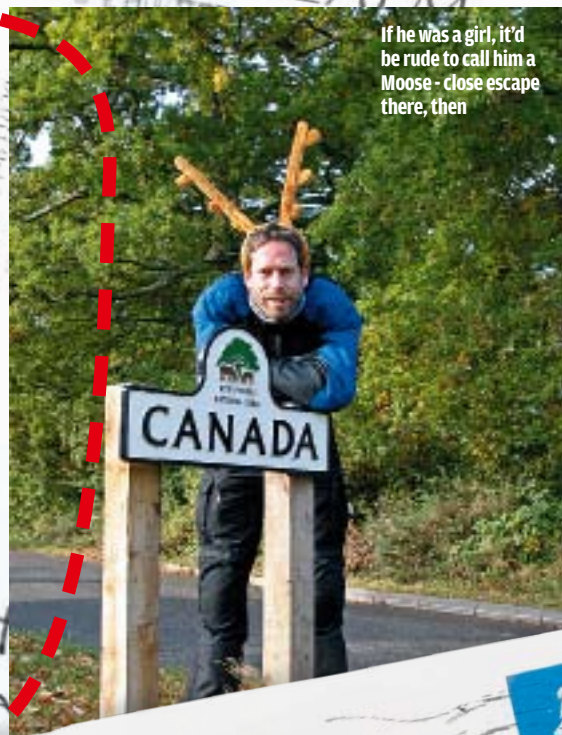
Random, but completely true, there really is somewhere just outside Farnham called Egypt. The locals walk a bit funny, and in truth it sphinx a bit, but it's not overly unpleasant. Only one place left to visit and one that after 1,139 miles on a 125cc bike in

three days has real meaning. When we arrived at World's End that was just how I felt, my body was battered, my spirits broke and my arse pummelled into submission. The moral of this pathetic tale, next time you have a stupid idea, try and keep it to yourself.

CONCLUSION

Although this was a bit of a light-hearted trip around the UK it does demonstrate what a spectacular bike the YZF-R125 is. It sat on its rev limiter for hour after hour with not a single hint of a protest and continually delivered over 80mpg, which is simply awesome. The comfort levels are more that up to journeys of over 200miles, it keeps up with traffic on A-roads, is happy at 72mph on a motorway and on the back roads is a great laugh with its real trump card, and one that sets it aside from other 125s, it looks the nuts and cars see it in their rear view mirror and move

If he was a girl, it'd be rude to call him a Moose - close escape there, then



aside because they think it's a bigger bike. This is a bike that gains respect on the road.

As for me? Well, what tiny piece of self-respect I did have has now been completely destroyed, if you spot me under a flyover in Croydon drinking cider from a plastic bottle throw us a few coppers... A big thanks to Fast Bikes readers Simon Brooke and Leigh Woodward for their photo skills! **FB**

