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Desert Travels: Motorcycle Journeys In The Sahara And West Africa



Synopsis

Today, following over a decade of kidnappings, much increased trafficking, banditry and terrorist activities, as well as nomadic rebellions and not least the recent spread of weaponry from Libya, tourism in the central Sahara has collapsed or has become severely restricted. But it wasn't always like that. The 1980s were a golden age of independent exploration: post-colonial nations had yet to be beset by internal strife, and the popularity of the original Dakar Rally, as well as the evolution of desert-capable motorcycles and 4x4s both saw adventure tourism flourish in the Sahara of Niger, Algeria and Mali. It's unlikely those days will return soon, so for once I found myself doing the right thing in the right place at the right time. In 1982 my first African ride on a ratty XT500 ended halfway across the Sahara with a cracked petrol tank. Once I got out of that one I vowed never to return, but the lure of the dunes proved too great to a youthful despatch rider. Over the next decade I made several more forays into the Sahara and West Africa on, or travelling with motorbikes. They included an ill-fated motorcycle tour from which only one rider returned riding. Most of this book describes that tour, and in between accounts of my travels, I weave in historical and cultural episodes from the region, and discuss on the nature and appeal of desert travel. Desert Travels was originally published as a paperback in 1996. This 1.5 version for Kindle has been lightly reworked to match a paperback reprint available at deserttravels.wordpress.com along with photos, maps and other material.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A great book by a well known author of motorcycling and touring books. Chris Scott is best known for his Adventure Motorcycling Handbook which is the pinnacle of motorcycle touring so it came as a bit of a shock to discover in the Kindle version of Desert Travels that he no longer uses a motorbike and considers it too dangerous. This version shows him, in a snapshot of history, initially describing his motorbike travels in Algeria and then following his Road to Damascus revelation, hitchhiking through the Gold Coast of Western African with their maniacal bus and taxi drivers. I was not sure which is more dangerous? The book itself keeps the reader interested and the Kindle is an updated version of the original. A good read for those who, like me, sit at home and pretend to be adventure travellers. PG

Shorter might have been better but the author chose instead to write not only about solo motorcycle travel in the desert but also later about his work as a guide, for which he admits no talent and the story in fact starts to splutter like a failing ignition system. By the book to read about how off road adventure travel was pioneered and marvel at our simplicity and naiveté and at how much we accomplished. I rode the Sahara a couple of years before the author so I was thrilled to find someone tell it like it was. More of that and less of the guided tours would have been better. Worth a read if motorcycle travel intrigues you.

I had never heard of any of the places the author rode his bike. Very remote, very inhospitable and often dangerous. A real view of adventure in the most remote places of north Africa. A compilation of several trips.

Good story about Desert Travels from the early 80s. A great snapshot in time to an era that has long passed. It is written in a story format so you feel like you are sitting at a campfire listening to an old traveler recount his trips. This story is more about the mindset of the trip and the adventures than a "guide book" type of journal. In other words, it isn't about going 400km to Tam and filling up at the

BP, but more about taking a slightly different route on the Piste and finding broken down folks, what they are like, where they came from and what they are doing out in the middle of the desert. Good stuff and well written.

Well written and very down to earth. It turned out to be a surprisingly engrossing tale that I enjoyed very much. Just understand that this is a recounting of various journeys taken through the Sahara by the author and not a travel or guide book and you will not be disappointed. A tidbit of history is added for good measure and helps round out the work. Well worth the cost.

Good desert adventure story

Very evocative guide to touring Sahara, clearly based on personal experience. The author brings out the conflicts between motivation and practicality and the real need to choose one's traveling companions carefully. The comments on the mode of travel and the equipment are very down-to-earth. Would like to read more!

Great encounters. really enjoyed it

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