moto-africa.com’s Cape Town to Cairo motorcycle adventure tour remains as memorable as ever for all the lonely places visited, friendly people met and close brushes with danger.

For my beloved Amanda who encourages me to dream the ride and ride the dream.

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South Africa
Cape Town to Cairo: Day 1 : Cape Town to Knysna - 554 km

The adventure began in Cape Town, meeting with Mark and Colin in front of the Westin Hotel. Their bikes were brand new; however their protective bike gear looked skimpy and thin for our 50 day journey ahead. There were rain clouds in the sky and it was cold, snow on the high mountains. Despite the weather, we could hardly contain our excitement. Cairo here we come!

A great and scenic ride down the N2 and Garden Route saw us arriving safely in Knysna by late afternoon.

Cape Town to Cairo: Day 2 : Knysna – Bo Kouga 219 km

The day started with a beautiful ride along the Garden Route to Natures Valley and then another great ride up-and-down the old Bloukrans Pass. Colin decided against undertaking the “highest bridge bungee jump in the world” at the new Bloukrans river bridge as he was not feeling all well.

We then readied ourselves for the first gravel road of the tour as we headed for De Vlugt. Both Mark and Colin had early incidents where their bikes ran off the side stands but recovered nicely as we rode like champions to Angie’s G Spot for lunch. More glorious gravel and then up the awesome Prince Alfred pass to Avontuur and Mountain Pastures, our overnight destination.
Cape Town to Cairo: Day 3: Bo Kouga to Port Elizabeth - 301 km

As a result of all the rain, the rivers in the Baviaanskloof were impassable for motorcycles. This necessitated the mapping of new, tame, gravel routes through the Langkloof valley. The day started with a short but scenic gravel ride to ensure the Canadians find their gravel feet quickly on this tour; however minutes after joining the main tarred Langkloof road the skies opened up and soaked Colin and Mark to the bone. We dashed straight to Joubertina to warm them up with coffee and pancakes.

A short ride outside Joubertina, we stopped at an Agrimark to outfit the bedraggled looking Canadians with the best rain gear they could find in the shop. The new gear immediately lifted their spirits as we continued our journey in pelting rain into Port Elizabeth.

Cape Town to Cairo: Day 4: Port Elizabeth to Cintsa - 334 km

It was still cold and cloudy when we departed from our hotel in Port Elizabeth. Our first stop was the St Georges Sports Ground, in search of the “Tea Room” as described in Athol Fugard’s writings and of special interest to Mark. No such luck though as the “Tea Room” was no more. The only thing we found was Mark’s bike with a flat battery after leaving his lights on.

After sorting out the battery, we were off to East London, taking the scenic coastal road, stopping in Port Alfred and the Fish River Roadhouse for a snack.
Later that afternoon we arrived at Prana Lodge in Cintsa to 5 star luxury and the intrepid Canadians decided it was time for a dip in the Indian Ocean, weather despite.

**Cape Town to Cairo: Day 5 : Cintsa to Umgazi River Mouth - 373 km**

Another cold start to the day with a threatening cloud mass above. We wound our way through the Transkei to Mthata, where we the turn-off for Port St Johns. Venturing into the rural areas on the Wild Coast, we had to remain super alert as the Transkei Big Five **were out-and-about on the roads.

Soon after reaching beautiful Umgazi, the heavens, once more, opened up and it rained non-stop throughout the night.

** Transkei Big Five : chicken, dog, goat, sheep, cow and sometimes a pig and a donkey**

**Cape Town to Cairo : Day 6 : Umgazi River Mouth to Durban - 440km**

Pouring rain remained our constant riding companion for 7 straight hours throughout the day. Soaked to the bone our willing steeds took us over the flooded Umzimvubu river to Lusikisiki, Flagstaff, Bizana, Port Edward and Durban. The Canadians rode like champions in the inclement weather... only to see the adventure and never to complain
By now, Mark and Colin were fed-up with wet feet and damp clothing and this necessitated a quick stop at a local bike gear shop to outfit the riders with essential biker rain gear and protective clothing. In pouring rain we headed due north again to Stanger and Empangeni on the beautiful N2, surrounded by sugar cane fields, plantations and the fantastic landscapes of the northern Kwa-Zulu Natal province.

Despite the rain, we made good progress and hoped to arrive early enough at Phinda Game Reserve for the evening game drive. Outside the town of Hluhluwe we turned onto a gravel road towards Phinda......my mistake......mud road.

First it was Colin and his bike that became separated with a perfect Ninja roll. Fortunately with no damage to man or machine. Stirred but no shaken and a mere 100 metres further it was Mark’s turn. His slip in the mud looked innocent enough, but the damage to his bike was severe.

Properly stirred, we continued our mud clogged journey with a lot more respect for the road ahead. A road filled with several new rivers and mud ponds.

Dog tired and covered in mud we arrived at Phinda as the sun was setting.
Mark undertook an early morning game drive as he has never been to Africa, Colin decided to sleep in whilst I started to wash and repair the damaged bikes. Once again Q-Bond and Duct Tape came through and worked its magic keeping all the plastic parts together.

Later that morning, Colin announced that he was not feeling well and would be returning to Canada. Within an hour he had arranged a charter plane to take him to Johannesburg and before long he was gone. It was sad to see him leave the tour so soon.

Mark and I decided to strip Colin’s bike of all the good parts we required to rebuild his bike. This exercise took us a good 5 hours to complete. However, Mark’s bike was as good as new by the time we were finished. It was also time to leave Phinda and by late afternoon we made our way down the dreaded mud road to Zulu Heritage Lodge without incident.
Mozambique

Mozambique - Save River bridge
Cape Town to Cairo: Day 9: Zulu Heritage Lodge to Maputo - 322 km

The sun was shining - amazing- the world was awaiting us! The road to Pongola was beautiful, flanked by sugar cane fields and fever trees. We entered Swaziland, painlessly, at the Golela border post and continued towards Big Bend. All the filling stations enroute were dry and we were concerned that we might get stuck next to the road, so soon in the tour. However the Fuel Angel smiled upon us just before our Big Bend turnoff onto glorious gravel roads. The Swaziland countryside was stunning with great GS roads to keep us happy all the way to Siteki.

At Mhlamene we entered Mozambique with another smooth border crossing. My GPS routed us down the mountains to the floodplains and stunning back roads of Goba.

We arrived at a bridge that had been “blown-up” or washed away for some time now and our hearts sank into our shoes as we saw the raging river we had to cross. Can we do it? We took some time to study the locals crossing the river with their vehicles, adjacent the old bridge. Hmm…. Not so straightforward. Lots of boulders and a strong current dragging at the wheels. To turn around was not an option and we eventually mustered enough courage to venture down to the river. Mark got stuck on a sandy-muddy patch right away and in my excitement to park my bike to “rescue” Mark, my bike toppled over and slid towards the river. However, we both recovered and made it across the river safely. What a ride!

We eventually arrived to the mad Maputo traffic and tiredly found our way to the 5 star Polana Hotel for a relaxing overnight stay. What a day – what a ride!
Cape to Cairo: Day 10: Maputo to Inhambane - 500 km

Our departure from Maputo, in peak hour traffic, can only be described as hectic. A strangled mix of people, cars, trucks and wheelbarrows in classic African style. Motorcycles are marvellous moving through this organised disorder.

We headed north on the palm tree lined road to XaiXai seeing rural poverty, but also many happy faces. At Quissico we viewed the azure lagoon from atop and took a moment to admire the clear blue waters of the lake at Inhardone. Eight hours later we arrived in Inhambane and managed to find a room in the relaxing but rundown Pensão Pachiça, home to stunning sunsets on the foreshore.

Cape Town to Cairo: Day 11: Inhambane to Vilankoulo - 300 km

We left Inhambane at 7h30 and followed the sandy shortcut around the bay to join the main route North. Mark was starting to find his gravel legs. We stopped at the Poussada do Maxixe for breakfast. What a disastrous affair! Espresso = ricoffee you mix from a tin. Breakfast = non comprehendo English and so it turned out to be a feeble affair.

The beautiful coconut palm tree lined road north, riding a great bike, was good for the soul.....That was until an ice-cream policeman aka traffic police jumped from behind a tree and indicated to me to pull over. Speeding in a 60km zone he says. I said it cannot be... You meter is broken and there was no 60km warning sign. No, he said, 2000 meticals spot fine. I said - not so. I want to see the warning sign.
So I ride back for several kilometres and cannot find any 60km warning sign. By now furious about the injustice, I head back at speed - I want my driver's licence back which the scumbag traffic cop was holding in solitary confinement in his truck.

As a matter of course he refused to hand it back, but I managed to catch him by surprise when I started to wrestle him. His AK47 wielding sidekick fortunately does nothing. In the process I tried to wrestle my way into the truck where my precious drivers licence resided. There were anxious moments in the ensuing struggle.....Mark looks upon the mad South African.....

Eventually, in the spirit of good neighbourliness and client confidence, I released the traffic cop from my death grip with the realisation that it is a no-win situation in a foreign country.

After a lengthy, hostile period and 2000 meticals later I got my licence back - with a receipt nogal....blicksems.

We arrive to a beautiful sunset in Vilankulo. Life is good!

**Cape Town to Cairo: Day 12 : Vilankulo to Chimoio - 500km**

The day started with a great ride through a poor and dry countryside. Crossing several impressive rivers such as the Save, Buzi and Revue.

With all the fuel stations running on empty, we were forced to buy 20l petrol from containers @ R20/l. at Maxungue. However, we could not complain as our wheels were rolling again.

At Inchope we turned West on the EN6 towards Chimoio, an industrious town with organised farming activity. Our overnight stay at the Pink Papaya was very basic backpacker style with one toilet (that had to be primed before flushing could take place) amongst all the guests.
Cape Town to Cairo: Day 13: Chimoio to Tete - 385 km

Some interesting facts about Mozambique: 10 years ago Mozambique was amongst the poorest countries in the world. Today Tete is being punted as the fastest growing economy in the world.

The ever changing landscape now have Boabab trees populated with larger communities farming charcoal, cotton, maize, tobacco and goats. Tete's frontier town feel remains despite its modern additions. A warm, humid and interesting day's ride.
Malawi

Malawi 15 Sep 2012
Cape Town to Cairo : Day 14 : Tete to Mangochi via Blantyre – 480 km

A long day in the saddle with the road to Zobue in poor condition and presenting some tricky riding. The border crossing on both sides however was painless.

A quick stop in a very hot Blantyre for food, money and fuel and then we rode to Liwonde where Lake Malawi runs into the Shire River. Extensive road works outside Blantyre made for slow progress but the last 100km to Mangochi and Nkopola Lodge was a breeze.

Now sitting with my feet in the sand, a cold one in the hand and staring at tranquil Lake Malawi. Life is good!

Cape to Cairo : Day 15: Mangochi to Chintheche - 400km

Somehow Mark manages to lose his riding goggles before we depart. Not a good start to the day as they are an essential part of his outfit. Despite our best efforts, we cannot find it. The great ride north, along the lakeshore takes us past numerous small and poor villages with lots of friendly people, goats and bicycles on the road.

Shortly before Monkey Bay we turn off onto a gravel short cut that eventually connects us again with the main North road, however not before Mark had an anxious moment when he got separated from his bike with a roll in the dust.

All the fuel stations en route had run dry and we are forced, once again, to buy from the roadside dealers at black-market prices. Hey, but the wheels keep rolling.

We arrive by late afternoon at Chintheche, a small paradise on the Malawi lakeshore.
Today was a lovely lazy day on Lake Malawi. Catching up with reading, washing and cleaning our bikes.

It was also my birthday and to my surprise the staff at the lodge managed to bake me a birthday cake and sing me a song-dance. Another great day in Africa with a stunning sunset. Tomorrow we ride north again.
Tanzania

Tanzania  19 Sep 2012 - Kilimanjaro
Cairo to Cape Town: Day 17: Chintheche to Mbeya, Tanzania - 475km

A scenic ride to the hilltop city of Mzuzu and then through the Rumphi valley, back to the northern shoreline of Lake Malawi. Not much shoreline activity, but for some fishermen and basic cash crop farming.

The border crossings delivered on its usual entertainment value with money changers and insurance touts abound. Everyone has role to play or is it act?

We climbed to a cooler 2300m above sea level through beautiful plantations of tea, bananas, potato and onion fields. A beautiful late afternoon ride into the city of Mbeya.

Cape Town to Cairo: Day 18: Mbeya to Morogoro, Tanzania - 640 km

Note to myself: Remember to never, never, never, ever again agree to a request to ride the "easier" but longer asphalt road from Iringa to Arusha. Always take the direct gravel road via Dodoma – it is much safer!

As Mark was still not comfortable on gravel roads, I was persuaded to ride the road from Hell. Nothing can be more dangerous than this road.

As we descended into the Rift Valley on a "twee-spoor" asphalt track, brought about by sheer truck over loading, we were confronted for 9 non-stop hours by speeding and overloaded trucks, busses, taxis and cars with no regard to life or limb.

Overtaking on blind corners, losing their load in the road, road works, detours, ice-cream police, countless speed humps, and countless breakdowns in the middle of the road, pothole/craters, numerous vehicle wrecks and accident scenes, too many near misses with
overtaking oncoming traffic. Not a day to repeat, however picturesque the landscape. We had taken no photos the entire day and were totally pleased to arrive alive, 9.5 hours later in Morogoro.

**Cape Town to Cairo: Day 19: Morogoro to Moshi - 540 km**

The day was a repeat of the previous day. More heart stopping near misses and crooked cops. Bliksems! I have never sworn so much in my entire life as today.

Did I say the country side was stunningly beautiful? And then Killi made her appearance.... All the road troubles forgotten, we could just bask in her late afternoon glory.

**Cape Town to Cairo : Day 20: Moshi via Arusha to Karatu - 235 km**

When we left Moshi in the morning, Kilimanjaro was still draped in cloud. How lucky we were to see her in all her glory yesterday.

Today was an easy riding day through the heartland of the Masai tribe of Tanzania and past beautiful Lake Manyara. Despite more potholes, roadwork’s and chaos traffic we reached our lodge in Karatu by early afternoon, but not before we got new riding goggles for Kamikazi Mark in Arusha . Tomorrow we will be going on a Safari down the Ngorogoro Crater.
Cape Town to Cairo: Day 21: Karatu - Ngorogoro Crater - Arusha - 153 km

It remains an amazing experience to be on the Ngorogoro Crater rim by sunrise. Words and photos could not explain yet another very special day in Africa.
Kenya

The longest Road - Moyale Kenya
Cape Town to Cairo : Day 22: Arusha - Namanga - Nairobi - 280 km

A short 100km ride around Mount Meru, Mount Longido and on towards Namanga border with Kenia.

We received excellent service from BMW Nairobi who arranged to drop our previously arranged spare tyres at Jungle Junction. Nairobi traffic, despite being a Saturday, was indescribable chaos.

Arriving at Jungle Junction we were met with motorcycle mayhem. A wave of bikes was in the process of being prepared for an outgoing tour.

However, Chris Handschue, proprietor and top bike mechanic, came through and fitted our bikes with their new shoes and excellent service in record time.

Tomorrow we ride north, the equator awaits us.

Cape Town to Cairo : Day 23: Nairobi to Archers Post - 330km

What a day! To avoid the expected Sunday traffic choke, we departed from Nairobi shortly after 7h00. We made good progress and were just about to get on the freeway when Mark’s bike got the first flat tyre of the tour and so it happens right in front of an army regimental head courters.
We were perceived a threat to the base’s security and our passports were duly confiscated. Unwillingly, we were initially allowed to remove the wheel and affect the repair. Quite a mission as we had to remove and replace the inner tube in the now piping hot African sun.

We were about to reinstall the rear wheel when the base commander arrived and chased us across the highway “finish and klaar”. What a mess, a bike with a rear wheel halfway fitted!

Somewhat shaken but not stirred, we completed the repair and proceeded with our journey north, a mere 2.5 hours later. Getting closer to the equator, we were now riding through lush, evergreen landscapes.

The planned focal point of the day’s ride was to cross the equator and take the ever important “I was there” photos. Somewhere, in overtaking slow traffic outside Nanyuki we missed the “very poor” signage altogether. Only much later we consulted the GPS and then the both of us did not have the heart to turn around in the slow Sunday afternoon traffic crawl. Damm....,

The journey continued to Isiolo where a brand new, thanks to the Chinese, tarred road north awaited us. In 2008, this was where the dreaded gravel road to the Ethiopian border started.

A quick 30 kilometres later, including a short gravel section, brought us to the dilapidated, sleepy gates of the Shaba National Park. Halt said the gatekeeper, no bikes allowed! Tired and dirty we expected the worst. However, contact with the lodge in the park was established and 40 minutes later transport arrived. We were taken to the Sarova Shaba lodge on the banks of Uaso Nyiro river. A true oasis in the desert.

During the course of the day my bike’s front brake calliper securing bolts went astray. It could only be that it had not been torqued during the previous day’s brake pad replacement exercise at Jungle Junction. It is a serious problem and I am not quite sure whether I have any spares that will be able to do the job. The cable ties I have used to temporarily secure it won’t last. Tomorrow will tell.

**Cape Town to Cairo : Day 24: Archers Post to Marsabit - 245 km**

We only departed from the Sarova Shaba lodge at 8h45 as today would by all accounts be a fairly short riding day. Once reunited with our bikes we affected some basic maintenance and finding an all-important bolt in my stash that will hold the brake callipers in place. What a miracle.
We headed north again on the blissful new tar road through a very sparsely populated region - Samburuland. I was filled with a certain sense of sadness that real adventure in Africa, on horrible gravel roads full of riding challenges, had eventually come to an end.

And then the tarred road came to an abrupt end after a short 110 kms....just after the town of Merille. My sense of sadness soon dissipated with the scorching hot African sun and corrugation-upon-corrugation gravel road. It was tough going and km-upon-km was very slowly gained. Mark particularly struggled with the African heat, coming from a milder Canada climate.

At Liasimis we met some of the friendly, local Samburu pastoralists, also seeking shelter against the midday heat and shared a couple of conversations in the shade of a local shop.

It took us a good 5 hours to complete the dusty, rocky, hot, desolate, semi-desert, bone shuddering 140 km gravel to the frontier town of Marsabit and enjoyed every moment of it. I certainly did!

One of the afternoon highlights was when a fully grown hyena scrambled across the road, right in front of my bike. That's Africa for you!

In Marsabit we stayed at Jey Jeys. Another truly African experience at R50.00 (US$6) a head.

Cape Town to Cairo : Day 25: Marsabit to Moyale - 245km

Phew, what a day! We rode out of Marsabit at the break of dawn. As we left the dusty old town behind, we noticed the road works of the soon to be brand new tarred road to Turbi and eventually Moyale. This definitely spells the end of an era for adventure bikers. However,
we still had to ride the dreaded old road. Despite the volcanic rocks, unrelenting corrugations, powder pits, dust and heat, we made steady progress, crossing the moon landscape on the way to Turbi. We also came to the conclusion that there are some very tough people and camels out here that will be able to survive on the moon.

In Turbi, whilst looking for water to quench our thirsts, we made new friends with the local folk and then, 20km out of the village, Mark came rolling of his bike on a particularly bad gravel section. Mark was fine, but the bike’s clutch lever was missing and brake lever badly bent. We feared the worst..... "n Boer maak ‘n plan” and with my trusty little vice grip and duct tape a clutch lever was engineered that worked like a charm and got us mobile again. Despite the on-going though road conditions, Mark rode his bike all the way to Moyale with his “new” vice-grip- duct-tape clutch lever and is growing very fond of it.

Ten very dusty and testing hours later we rode into Moyale, Kenya. The border procedures were efficiently taken care of on both sides and eventually, tiredly we parked our bikes in front of the Koket Borena Moyale Hotel - we are in Ethiopia.

We had arrived in a new country with a new calendar, time measurement, alphabet, language and of course, Njera and cold beer to name but a few....
Ethiopia
Cape Town to Cairo: Day 26 : Moyale (Ethiopia) to Dila - 415km

After a good night's sleep and breakfast we felt energised again to tackle the all tarred roads to Dila. The roads in Moyale were terrible, but improved as soon as we were out of the town.

The local population of this region are mostly humble cattle and camel herders. The other landmarks of the region are the gigantic ant heaps.

A large road construction project, building a new road north, was on the go and this resulted in several gravel bypasses being introduced. From Yabello the road steadily climbed to approximately 2500m and the landscape changed to the most beautiful, fertile, evergreen forests, banana plantations and little villages lining the scenic road. And of course there were hoards of people and all types of animals on the road. The children would run up to the road and excitedly and angrily shout “Farnjé” and “You-You” as we rolled through. Not the most pleasant welcome for a visitor in a foreign country. (This angry behaviour apparently stems from a history of occupation by foreign overlords)

It was rainy season in Ethiopia and we got our first introduction to an all mighty cloud burst. We were forced to pull off the road as we could not see through the rain curtain. 45 Minutes later it was all over and we were back on the road again.

Mark's bike had lost 2 crucial, "rear frame" mounting bolts during the previous day's brutal corrugated gravel ride. As we entered Dila, with dusk setting in, I saw a sign “Auto Works” and so we turned in. A messy mud pit of a back yard mechanic hovel if there ever was one. The problem was analysed and before we could blink our eyes the “mechanic” started welding a nut on the broken bolt, one inch away from the full plastic petrol tank! We rolled our eyes at each other and dreaded the worst outcome. Miraculously it all worked out fine and the bike was fixed and ready for the journey ahead.

Finding suitable accommodation, after dark, in the busy town of Dila, was not easy. We explored a few pensions, all without running water and then decided on the Tourist Hotel. Dirty and very noisy, but at least with a cold shower and at R100 a head it was good value.
Another difficult ride out of Dila with the continuous streams of people and animals on the road; including the jeering children of yesterday.

The beautiful, green and fertile landscape continued and it was difficult to understand why Ethiopia was once the image of starvation in Africa and not the bread basket. As today was a religious public holiday (Meskal) in Ethiopia, the roads were relatively quiet. Closer to Addis, during a road side stop, Mark got ambushed by a group of celebrating youths and was forced to join in the festivities. We arrived in Addis to warm water, a running shower, clean white bed sheets and soft pillows. Another though day in the life of an African adventurer.

Today was Mark’s first introduction to African red tape. After initial success in getting his laptop’s broken screen replaced (this coincided with his earlier roll in Kenya), we set off to the airport to expedite the clearance process of his new clutch and break lever that had arrived from South Africa. 3 hours later, it had been resolved that no import duties were payable and the parcel was ready to be released from customs. Mark looked slightly taken aback with this new African experience.
We were keen to escape the soot, grime and traffic gridlock of Addis and headed north for the hills. Aha, and what beauty awaited us over the Addis hills. Picture perfect rolling green hills, dotted with sheep and cows grazing lazily. At 5pm we called it a day and found adequate shelter in Mukaturi, at R30 a head – a new record for the tour. For dinner enjoying a cold beer, njera and tibs washed down by a strong Ethiopian coffee. Life was indeed good!

Cape Town to Cairo : Day 29 : Mukaturi to Mota - 288km

Another big riding day started with an early departure from Mukaturi. The landscapes were just fantastically beautiful-green. Enough with the adjectives – it was just plain nice.

At Goha Tsion we had a quick breakfast before we started the magnificent Blue Nile gorge descent. After taking a couple of snaps at the top, I led the way down and crossed the new Blue Nile River Bridge and waited for Mark to arrive...... Mark did not arrive.

After waiting for 15minutes I decided it was time to ride back to where I have left him earlier. A 30 km ride to the top of the escarpment to find him, waiting patiently, with new friends, and a flat front tyre. We repaired the puncture confidently and were soon on the road again.

The ascent from the Blue Nile to Djen was as spectacular if not more awesome than our earlier descent. Shortly after Dejen I steered us "incorrectly" onto the gravel road "short-cut" to Bahir Dar. Only realising my mistake in the town of Bichena, 35km down the road, we were in no mood to turn back. Mark was not happy riding gravel again.
The gravel surface was real good and scenery, in Mark's words, Biblical. Everyday village life, in all its glory, unfolded along the road. Sheep, cattle and donkeys being herded over the rolling green hills. People, upon people, upon children, on foot to somewhere in rich and colourful traditional attire.

We only made it to the Wubet Hotel in Mota, a dusty and dirty old town, before nightfall. We were still a long 120km short of Bahir Dar.

**Cape Town to Cairo : Day 30: Mota to Bahir Dar - 118 km**

We left the grim town of Mota at 7h00 in even grimmer looking weather. It was raining and the road was gravel and muddy.

We took it real slow and fortunately the weather started to clear up. We continued to descended and ascended valley upon beautiful valley. There was an anxious moment when we came upon a number of bulls, in the middle of the road, locking horns. They gave Mark one look and decided he was more interesting. Mark managed to make a nimble escape.

This route can be highly recommended to all gravel riding lovers with lots of patience and time. It is a unique riding experience and not to be missed.

Four hours later we arrived in Bahir Dar on Lake Tana and the origin of the Blue Nile. We found comfortable lodging at Kiriftu Resort and Spa and spent the afternoon taking a boat ride to the "origin" of the Blue Nile and visiting the 900 year old Orthodox Christian monastery, Debre Miriam on one of the Lake Tana islands.
Cape Town to Cairo : Day 31 : Bahir Dar to Gonder - 188km

A short and scenic ride north, around Lake Tana to Gonder. Shortly after Addis Zemen we were met with the sighting of a striking inselberg. We rode through the busy, dirty town of Azezo to arrive in even busier Gonder. Gonder is a university town and home to the historic (1647) Debre Birhan Sellassie church (known for its ceiling paintings) and the Fasllides Palace ruins on the hilltop.

Like clockwork, there was a heavy downpour at 4pm and we started to look forward to entering dry and scorching Sudan.

Cape Town to Cairo : Day 32: Gonder to Gedaref (Sudan) - 360 km

Bye-bye Ethiopia, hello Sudan! We started the morning by descending the Ethiopian highlands outside Gonder (2900m) towards the Sudanese border at Gallabat (700m). As this road is now all tarred, Africa has lost another great motorcycle adventure road. A brilliant, scenic ride in the countryside, but no longer any riding challenge of note.

Metema, the border town, was hot and sticky and luckily there was minimal border activity. We had some anxious moments when it was discovered that Mark's bike and "carnet " import documents did not match his bike's vin numbers. However, with all issues eventually resolved we were in Sudan. The last 170 km of the day's ride to Gedaref flew by with, at long last, very little human and animal traffic on the road.
Sudan
Cape Town to Cairo: Day 33: Gedaref to Khartoum - 425km

After unsuccessfully searching for an Atm in Gedaref that would accept our bank cards, we set off for Khartoum; short on cash and fuel. The south of Sudan was beautifully green after recent heavy rains and large scale crop farming projects were everywhere evident. With the last of our Sudanese Pounds scraped together we managed to fill up with enough fuel to progress to Wad Medani, where we met up with the Blue Nile again.

After stocking up on cash, fuel and food we tackled the last stretch to Khartoum in the nearly unbearable afternoon heat. In sprawling Khartoum we were greeted, once again, by more crazy traffic and it took us a while to find our comfortable hotel, the Bougainvillea, in an obscure back street.

Cape Town to Cairo: Day 34: Khartoum Rest day

The temperature in Khartoum during the night time was 29 °C and during the day 40°C. With 50% humidity factor mixed in, it was not pleasant on the streets. We decided to give our bikes a rest and took a tul-tuk (local taxi) to downtown Khartoum to view the confluence of the Blue- and White- Nile to form the Nile. Tomorrow we ride north. Cairo is nearly in sight.
By departing from Khartoum at 6h45 we avoided all the hectic city traffic. It was going to be another sizzling day as we were already sweating in our jackets. But for the greenbelt and farming activities around the Nile, the North of Sudan is essentially a rock and sand desert. However, amidst this barren land and choking heat, some Sudanese and their animals were managing to stay alive in their mud brick shelters. We do not sufficiently appreciate how lucky and privileged we are.

The day was full of surprises. Approximately 175km outside Khartoum, whilst we were riding through the desert, out of the dunes stepped a policeman that indicated that we should pull off. What now? Yes, he explained, you had been speeding. 100 km in a 90 km zone. What utter nonsense! In his vehicle he had a laptop computer with a beautiful picture of me in full motion. I immediately asked him if I could get a copy.... He laughed, but allowed me to take a photo. Both Mark and I were just too deflated to put up a fight and handed the walk-away money over. It instantly vanished into the glove box - no paperwork.

We briefly stopped at Meroë to view the majestic cluster of pyramids in the desert, however, we did not explore the ruins in too much detail as a result of the scorching heat.

The last 100km to Atbara was really testing with a warm desert wind adding to our growing discomfort. Despite the size of sprawling Atbara, it took us quite a while to find a suitable hotel, with air conditioning, such as the Baraka.
Cape Town to Cairo: Day 36: Atbara to Merowe - 320 km

We planned to trick the day’s heat onslaught by a 6h00 departure. Once we had crossed the Nile, we were on an all new, tarred road running east - west through the desert. What a joy, a cool morning breeze, the sun rising on our backs and with virtually no other traffic on the road. Tracks 4 Africa maps still shows this road as a gravel road which will take 19 hours to ride. We arrived in Merowe, shortly after 9h00.

Our progress north was now painfully slow as we had planned to arrive just-in-time for the weekly, Wednesday ferry from Wadi Halfa to Aswan.

We visited the local, Merowe souk (market) during the afternoon in search of food. We were friendly received by the locals but needed a strong stomach for some of the food on offer. However, their local vetkoek was tops.

At sunset I paid a quick visit to the ancient ruins and pyramids, Jebel Barkal, just outside the town of Karima. Nice ride – great pyramids!
What an awesome day! It started at 6h00 with a brilliant 200km ride through the desert (on a new tarred road) to arrive at 8h00 in Dongola - just in time for breakfast.

Outside Dongola we had our first desert storm experience. Mark, riding in front, vanished into the dust cloud and only, infrequently make a reappearance. Holding on for dear life to my motorcycle I would lean into the gust to stay on top and with limited visibility hurtle forward. A new riding experience and sometimes a scary one.

Yip, it’s official. Sudan’s last wilderness frontier had been tamed. It was really a sad moment. What used to be 3 day gravel and sand adventure ride had now become a high speed ride on a perfectly tarred road, all the way from Khartoum to Wadi Halfa. We completed the day’s ride in 6 hours despite the desert storm and a stop-over in Abri. No matter what, the ride through the desert remained a special experience.

From Wadi Halfa we will take the weekly Wednesday ferry, on Lake Nasser, to Aswan, Egypt. In the meantime, we would get to know the town of Wadi Halfa a little better.... there were many friendly people there.
As usual I woke at 5am and not having any specific goal for the day decided to climb a small hill behind the hotel to watch the sunrise. Sunrise and sunsets in Africa are just special events.

The day entailed a leisurely walk to the town centre, a tasty brunch of sorts, meeting with our local fixer, meeting other overlanders and motorcycle tourists also making their way north, reading, resting, internet cafe, another great sunset, eating, more reading and off to bed. A perfect day in Wadi Halfa.

**Cape Town to Cairo : Day 39: Wadi Halfa - Bikes on Board - 5 km**

Good news! Maghdī Boshara, our local fixer, arrives and indicates that we can start with the process of getting our bikes loaded onto the barge.

We set off to the customs building close to pier and await the necessary customs inspection. All done and the loading can commence.

What a process! Impossibly flimsy and broken ramps, steep ramp up to the deck and even steeper down into the cargo hold. Thankful that we had managed to get the bikes safely on board and so far unscathed, we retired happily to the town of Wadi Halfa where Mark rewarded himself in the purchase of a nice galabia, petticoat, shoes and fez. Smartly dressed, he quickly made many new friends and would soon become the mayor of Wadi Halfa, should we stay any longer.
Over the past 3 days we have become quite fond of dusty and dirty old Wadi Halfa with its now many familiar and friendly faces abound. We departed for the ferry terminal building at 12h00 and our overloaded ferry only stuttered out of the harbour as the sun was setting in the west. We still had no guarantee that the barge, with our motorcycles, would leave anytime soon. We also received the unsettling late news that the barge captain planned to load a caravan of camels in the hold - with our bikes! Only in Africa!

There was no room, as usual, on the ferry deck, in the galleys, canteen or second class benches below, for a mouse. Fortunately, our fixer, managed to secure the very last, "1st class" cabin for us. This gave us privileged access to a very dirty coupé with 2, even dirtier, bunk beds. Great!

We settled in for a long and restless night on our Lake Nasser ferry - we were, at long last, on our way to Egypt.
Egypt
Welcome to Aswan, 18 hours and 320km later. After immense pushing and shoving and the standard chaos procedures we managed to disembark our ferry and were met on the shore by Mohamed Abouda, our Aswan fixer.

He ably managed taxi transport and suitable hotel accommodation in the city of Aswan. It was now a matter of patience, awaiting the arrival of the barge with our bikes, before the clearance process and issuing of number plates could start.

Aswan, a fairly large city, is scenically located on the river Nile. But for the incessant touts wanting sell you horse carriage or boat rides, be your self-appointed tour guide, it is a pleasant city with lots of interesting shops, souk-market, promenade, restaurants, historic ruins, museums, sites to see and river to explore.

It was with great expectations that we met Mohamed at 8h30 and set off to the central police station, to start the process to get our bikes issued with Egyptian number plates.

The next stop was back to the ferry port, 14km outside Aswan, to off-load our bikes from the barge. The off-loading was even trickier than the loading. It took an immense physical effort
from all to push the bikes up the steep incline of the ramp and then not to lose control on the narrow down-ramp. My bike toppled over on this final hurdle but, fortunately Mark put his body on the line to protect it from any serious damage. The re-unification with our bikes after being 6 days apart was a sweet moment.

Now, only for the police to verify our frame numbers, customs to stamp our Carnet de Passage's, number plates to be issued and we would be back on the road!

Not so fast! My bike's documents proceeded through the very slow process without a hitch and then it was Mark's turn....Mark with Colin's bike and Carnet. The process was 99% completed when the Customs "general" asked for Mark's passport and noticed the discrepancy. And that is where the process stopped - shutters down, everyone out, get a new matching Carnet!

In Egypt anything is possible. Once again, Mohamed arranges ably with the AA guy in Cairo to fly down to Aswan and issue a new Carnet in Mark's name.... at a substantial cost of course. We hold thumbs it works out.

Meanwhile, I had been issued with Egyptian number plates and happily head for Aswan on my bike.

**Cape Town to Cairo : Day 45: Aswan to Luxor - 215 km**
The morning dragged on. Mark has left early to receive his new, illusive Carnet from the AA guy and conclude the clearance and licencing process of his motorcycle. He returned by 14h30... on his motorcycle! Miracle.

We decided to make a dash for Luxor in the sweltering afternoon heat and follow the Nile route. However, it turns out to be a mistake. Lots of slow traffic and too many speed humps to count. The net result was that we only arrived in Luxor after dark. The good news though was that we were back on the road!

**Cape Town to Cairo : Day 46: Luxor to Red Sea - 616 km**

As a result of the extra days spent in Aswan, we were pressed for time to get to Cairo. We left Luxor at 6h00 and could only view the beautiful Faronic temples from afar. Our route took us north to Quena on the Nile and a ride through the Western Desert to Safaga on the Red Sea.

We continued further north past gas and oil fields, wind farms in the desert and to the resort towns of Hurgada and Zafrana. Here, we were met with the sad evidence of huge resort developments that had come to a grinding halt as a result of the lack of tourism.

For the evening, we found a comfortable 5 star hotel on the Red Sea, with virtually no other guests. Even after a long day's ride there was still time to snorkel in the luke warm waters of the Red Sea and explore the beautiful coral reefs and tropical fish just off the beach.

With the finish line in sight, Mark managed to pick up a serious smiley on his front rim, riding through a pothole. Will we make it on own steam to the "promised land"?
At the break of dawn we were on the road and very quickly found ourselves on the Qattameya toll road. A fantastic, fast, triple-lane-in-both-directions, road routing through the Western desert to Cairo. We quickly arrived at the Gates to Cairo, with Mark's front wheel still intact. We had nearly arrived at our final destination.

We ventured into the Cairo peak-hour traffic with trepidation. It was everything we expected from a city with 20 million souls, no rules and everything with wheels on the go.

We met with our shipping agent at the airport whom would also be assisting us with the deregistration of our bikes with the traffic department. Again we head into the Cairo traffic...

After, what felt like hours of anguish and exhilaration we reached the traffic department. No, we cannot help you, you have to go to a different department .... back into the traffic again and so the process continued. At the end of a very long day, it was confirmed that Egypt is still the uncontested, world leader, in beaurocracy and somehow, flowing-chaos traffic.

After a final, 2 hour crawl, through the afternoon traffic to our hotel, Cairo's iconic pyramids at Giza came into sight and our African motorcycle quest was sadly over.
Cape Town to Cairo: Day 48: Cairo Customs - 1'km

The day's aim was to get our motorcycle Carnets stamped by customs and proceed to get our bikes crated for the flight home. Easy, our freighting agent appeared optimistic. Not so fast.....

As we arrived at the customs building a feeling of déjà vu and dread engulfed me. The very same place where I had spent 4 useless days in 2008! Like before, confident looking fixers are utilised to assist with the all Arabic process. Nothing had changed, still a lot of waiting, lot paperwork, a lot of useless animated talking and a lot of money changing hands to shepherd the process forward. For the first time on this tour, the ever competent customs officials managed to find Mark's bike engine number - a feat that BMW in Vancouver could not perform.

The clock struck 13h00 and the shutters came down. It was Thursday and the weekend exodus (to the Red Sea?) was taking place. Come back on Saturday they said! The bikes would remain impounded until then. Looking at the pictures; this was not a place where you want to leave a vehicle for too long!

No amount of money or impassionate speech from Mark could change their minds. The bikes stayed put, but they would allow our freighting agents to complete the process on our behalf. We admit defeat and dejectedly returned to the hotel.
No matter the constant harassment from the touts who wanted to sell us a camel ride, or be our self-appointed tour guide and friend, the Pyramids and Sinks simply remains special and somehow perfect.

What a ride it has been!
FINAL WORDS:

Morning has broken - Sudan 07 Oct
10 UNSCIENTIFIC AFRICAN MEGATRENDS WITNESSED

1. The Great North Road linking Cape Town to Cairo by tarred road is a near reality. Only in the very north of Kenya the road is still glorious gravel, but will soon be tarred.

2. Global warming is a reality. Also in Africa weather patterns are a changing.

3. Cell phones are now as commonplace as Coca Cola in Africa. Even the poorest of the poor has a cell phone and communicates with it. Kenyans have embraced cell phone airtime as their new trading currency. Think about that!

4. Welcome to the school of Life - Child labour to support the family income, work the fields and resultant lack of schooling is common place throughout Africa. There are no evidence that this will change anytime soon.

5. The poorest of the poor African nations are the friendliest i.e. Malawi. If you are poor, you have nothing to lose – Friendliness cost nothing. Greed and shellfish politics however poisons the soul and attitude.

6. Egyptians remain the world leaders of institutional bureaucracy. It is highly unlikely that they will vacate this spot any time soon

7. Tanzanian bus drivers and drivers in general are the worst and most lethal in the world. Be warned – you will be risking life and limb on their roads.

8. The growth witnessed in Africa is not sustainable. Most of the growth witnessed was infrastructural growth with short term benefits only.

9. Could Tete on the Zambezi river, Mozambique be the fastest growing city in the world? They certainly claim that anyway - Watch the space!

10. South Africa remains miles ahead of any other African country i.e. roads, agriculture, business development, banking etc.-South Africans should take good care of their country – politics and systemic corruption may ruin the party.
A WORD OF THANK YOU

No tour could ever be successful without the support from the many friends, family, supporters and co-workers working silently in the background or simply just encouraging:

1. Although only Mark (Kusnir) completed the tour, I believe it was due to Colin's (Wall) lust for adventure that the tour actually came to fruition. Without them there would have been be no tour. A special thanks to Mark, customer, riding companion and friend for seeing it through all the way to Cairo, despite several rolls on the gravel and sometimes silently suffering the hot-headed South African guide.

2. For Christine Boecker, Canadian Adventure Travel Agent par excel lance, for selecting moto-africa.com as the preferred tour guide. Her seamless arrangements, constant and clear communication, on two continents and support throughout the tour comes highly recommended:

   Christine Boecker C.T.C.
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3. To all our families for their unconditional support and coping, without assistance or complaints, for 50 days on the home front. Without your support we could never be adventurers.

4. To Pieter Malan, Mr Wine, friend and fellow biker for arranging the repatriation of Colin’s bike from Pinda to Stellenbosch as well as arranging the break and cutch levers for Mark’s bike to be couriered to Addis Abeba. A fiend in need is a friend indeed.

5. Willingstone Lunani and his team at BMW Nairobi for their efficient and friendly service in receiving and dropping off our spare tyres on a Saturday afternoon. You guys are tops!

6. All our friends and families for their words of encouragement on the facebook page.
LEFT IS RIGHT
Cape Town to Cairo 2012:

We arrived in Khartoum at the peak of the sweltering afternoon heat wave. Like in most African capital cities, the traffic is also plain crazy. Cheap petrol = too many cars on the road.

As we cruise down a double lane boulevard towards our overnight destination, I become aware of a reckless driver riding on my tail and then pushing dangerously close and in front of me and behind Mark, riding about 20 meters ahead. In my very tolerant manner, I give him a piece of my mind from the inside of my motorcycle helmet. Bliksem – you will still cause an accident!

The next moment, the fool bumps Mark right off his bike..... Mark flying to one side and the bike sliding in a different direction. Everything happening in slow motion and I fear the worst.

The peak hour traffic grinds to a standstill and I notice that Mark has somehow managed to get back on his feet. Thank goodness and what a relief! I manage to park my bike in the middle of the road and by now, my not-so-tolerant-anymore-blood is boiling in the afternoon heat.

Without thinking, I approach the right-hand, “driver side”, of the offending vehicle and assist the culprit with his exit, noticing that he was of sizeable built. By now, I am fully committed to give him a good tongue lashing on his reckless driving behaviour and slip in an “opstopper” or two. I could not allow the injustice to go unpunished! The “driver”, at first, taken aback by my actions, recovers quickly and manages to land a blow to my motorcycle helmet. Motorcycle helmet = 1, “driver” = 0. He lands another blow against the helmet, flinches and backs off. Motorcycle helmet = 2, “driver” = 0

By this time Mark has recovered sufficiently to try and appease the situation as the spectator crowd was growing at a rapid pace. Also at this moment the real driver of the reckless vehicle steps forward, enquiring why I was taking issue with his passenger.

Of course, this is Sudan! Here, they drive on the right-hand side of the road. The steering wheel is on the left-hand side.....