



ADVENTURE HERMIT

This month Thunder Roads Colorado Magazine introduces Joe Trey. Joe is a self-described “Adventure Hermit”. What is an Adventure Hermit you may ask; we will let Joe define that himself.

“Ad-ven-ture Her-mit - An unusual and exciting, sometimes hazardous, experience or activity performed by a person acting in solitude.”

As I Picked myself off the ground, the label on my Toughskins was an all too familiar reminder of how un-tough I really was. Bigger than most kids my age, and even those several grades above me, I was a target for anyone looking to gain playground respect. Knocking down this oversized 5th grader was an easy task, but my best defense was only a few tried. Those who did usually employed a sucker punch and a quick retreat to celebrate their success. Today was no different.

My sleeveless denim vest did me no favors as my elbows hit the ground first, scraped two layers of skin off and promptly began to bleed. At least he skipped my face. I was an easy bleeder and this always gave the aggressor unearned extra clout for drawing blood. The truth was, it was nothing a cold wind and a breeze couldn't do just as easily. The boy stood above me only long enough to say, “Your vest is stupid! How can you have both US Army patches AND Free Spirit patches. You're Stupid!” And with that, he ran away to

celebrate his toppling of the gentle, perhaps pathetic giant. I thought of my motorcycle riding uncles with their free spirited long hair; and my grandfathers, all decorated war veterans. I loved them all. I felt I represented them equally with my patches. Of course they were sewn onto my vest by my mom. I was too tough, or uncoordinated, to sew them on myself. But I couldn't understand the extreme anger? The experience would haunt me for years and would vividly return in my mid-20's.

Fast-forward 2 years to a near death experience involving a car, my ATV and me. My uncle Ted was a successful racer of the then legal 3-wheeler ATVs. I idolized him and spent every waking hour trying to become an accomplished rider. One afternoon, when crossing the street from my house to a neighboring field a speeding car collided into me. Leaving me with a mauled foot, split head and a compound fracture that would take months and a couple of surgeries before I fully recovered.

For various reasons, it would be more than 14 years before I started riding again. In 2006 I moved from my home in Connecticut to Colorado. When I arrived in Colorado the mountains and wide-open spaces screamed motorcycle to me. As soon as I had enough money I purchased a Honda 600 Shadow directly off of the showroom floor of Aurora Honda. Within 6 months I returned and traded it in for an 1100 Aero, with chrome spokes and white wall tires. Another year later, I traded up to a Valkyrie, because who wouldn't want a Honda Civic between their legs. But then it happened . . . The VTX 1800. The VTX was everything I ever dreamed of in a motorcycle . . . big, fast and badass. It made me feel tougher than I was and it helped me forget about that kid getting beat up on the playground so many years before. Denim jeans, of the non-Toughskin variety, black boots, leather vest and dark sunglasses increased my confidence. My long hair flying all around at 80 miles an hour was the freedom I had been searching for all of my life. Or so I thought.



In 2003, I signed up to attend a conference in Phoenix, AZ. I convinced my employer to trade me the cost of an airplane ticket towards hotels and I hopped on the VTX and began my journey from Denver to Phoenix. Armed with a half shell helmet and a state of the art flip-phone I began my first ride ever across state lines. I didn't know that rain gear was a thing. I had never even heard the acronym GPS and aside from buying a windscreen for the bike, I did little more to prepare than I would on an afternoon run through the foothills. Armed with a questionably overconfident sense of direction and a paper map of Colorado I headed southwest. My goal was to hammer out to Phoenix via, I-25 S, I-40 W and I-17 S. Three roads. A map was scarcely needed. Then I would figure out a return route past the Grand Canyon on the way home.

This simple plan was spoiled only a few miles into New Mexico. A couple riding from Texas pulled up alongside me at a gas station. They were headed to Denver and asked my destination. I told them Phoenix. They suggested I head a bit east and ride down NM-14 S. They assured me it was a picturesque ride and worth the extra time. I thanked them politely, but finished filling my tank with no intent of straying from my route. I'm an East Coaster. We pick direct routes. We fight to the death, or close to it, over, which routes are faster. We are not by nature sightseers, but people on a mission. I tore off a piece of jerky and threw back a few cashews, my daily ride diet, and continued south on I-25 S. But then something happened.

Rather than blast past the exit for NM-14 S I hesitated. I had a date in Albuquerque with carnitas, fresh guacamole a margarita or three. Having locked away all my watches since moving to Colorado I relied on the position of the sun to determine if a detour would keep me from my goal. Before I fully thought it through, I had taken the exit. I veered from the path. Within minutes I felt a strange sensation wash over me. I gave into the freedom of unknown adventure. Riding slower through the countryside offered a freedom that the 80-mile an hour highway was lacking. I was rebelling and straying from my own self-imposed path.

Back to my detour, this was different. No one was around. I stopped worrying about how I looked. It opened up my soul. And it spoke to me. It said, "You don't have to follow the signs. There is no "right way" to anywhere. Slow down. Enjoy. Maybe you will get where you're going, or better yet, maybe where you're meant to be." My east coast need for the fastest, most efficient route was being exorcised. The road was every bit as wonderful as they had

described. I passed through the picturesque town of Madrid, with no thought of its future role in John Travolta's, Wild Hogs. My whole mindset was changing over one frickin' exit! Really?

I continued picking roads that felt "Southish" until I eventually hit I 40-W just East of Albuquerque. I made my way to the Best Western in the center of town. Parked my bike. Cleaned up and head off in search of carnitas, guacamole and a margarita or three. Not everything had to change! Newly emboldened by my detour I could only imagine what the next day would offer. After dinner, I purchased a New Mexico map and began planning detours.

I woke around 5:30 AM and headed out of town. I picked the first road heading west off the highway. Before long I was on my first sandy dirt road. This was not part of my plan. Balancing the nearly 800 pound VTX, along with my 200 pounds on top of it, was like balancing a blueberry on a cornflake in a bowl of cereal, but I held my own. My muscles were exhausted, sweat poured down my face, and the odometer mocked my efforts of completing a whole mile off-road!

The first reward was seeing El Malpais National Monument and a spectacular view of the volcanic terrain. The second was the practice I had making way back to the paved road. Undiscouraged, I returned to the highway only briefly before heading south again



at Grants, NM. I discovered the Bandera Volcano just above the contradictory Ice Caves. Then further west I arrived at El Morro National Monument with more than 2000 signatures dating back to ancient pueblo times. I hiked trails in my full riding gear and cooled off as I rode to each new destination. Further on I visited the Navajo and Zuni tribal lands, before heading north to the Petrified Forest and the Painted Desert, a lifetime of sightseeing in a matter of hours. A few miles on I paused to stand on a corner in Winslow, AZ before heading to Flagstaff for a quick refueling.



Perfect for exploring the Colorado Rockies, where nearly all roads offer a challenging and scenic off-road alternative. I grew up on dirt bikes. I loved riding in the woods. But when I was old enough to get an "M" on my license I was thrilled to legally get out onto the open road. I loved the wind in my hair and the sound of loud pipes. But now I desired a bit of both. I wanted to get lost and then eventually pop back out for . . . well . . . carnitas, guacamole and a margarita or three.



I arrived in Phoenix, 15 hours and 700 miles later, around 8 PM



in the dark! Exhausted, sore but invigorated. The direct route from Albuquerque is about 420 miles via Payson and the Tonto National Forest, 470 miles if you stay on the Interstate via Flagstaff. As exciting as the day was, there were so many intriguing roads,

What I wasn't initially prepared for was the fashion transition. My chaps, leather vest and half-shell helmet were not quite right for this new style of riding. It was more than just fashion; it was a matter of safety. There was far more falling as I learned to lug this larger bike over rutted trails and rocks. Next came the negative response from some other riders. At first I was too ignorant to understand it. Some days I rode my VTX and other days the KLR, but, regardless, I was the same guy. Then as I stood in my garage looking at my loud piped sled and the silent knobby tired dual-sport enemy, I realized they were playing the role of sworn enemies; the Capulets and the Montagues from Romeo and Juliet. In an instant, I was once again that little kid wearing contradicting free spirit and army patches side by side on my jacket, but now it was based on what I rode.



trails really, that I passed that I knew I had to explore. I marked many of them on my map in hopes of returning someday perhaps with some type of street legal dirt bike.

It took several years before I discovered such a motorcycle. But in 2007, my gateway drug of choice into dual-sport riding came in the form of a 2008 Kawasaki 650 KLR; an inexpensive utilitarian motorcycle with a go anywhere attitude. Capable of easily reaching highway speeds, but manageable enough for moderate off road adventures.

On my next ride, I caught myself waving to a fellow rider, not in the customary down low position, but with my hand held high like one of the "onesie" wearing BMW riders hailing the Fuehrer. My jaw dropped to catch some flies. What was happening to me? Had I morphed over to the dark side? Was I Luke Skywalker? Was German engineering becoming my new "Vader?"

Perhaps not, maybe it was only the simple position of the handlebars that facilitated the up high wave. But in the interest of full disclosure,



immediately struck up a kinship. We swapped stories deep into the night in the El Tovar bar and restaurant. He became my inspiration to attempt to ride my Triumph Scrambler over 40 mountain passes in 40 hours when I turned 40, two year later, and to successfully complete my own Iron Butt Certification. There we were, two riders sharing the love of motorcycling. Reveling in the freedom of the road, far from home. Neither concerned about what the other was riding, aside from mutual admiration and a few jokes about how silly high handed waving looked!

And that, my friends, is how I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Dual Sport World of Motorcycle Riding AND Cruising. I admit I have trained myself into waving low even with high handlebars. It is my own special way of bridging the gap between riders . . . "one wave at a time." I am honored to share my story with Thunder Roads Colorado Magazine Readers. I look forward to sharing more paved and unpaved adventures as we share the road together and hopefully, sometime in the near future, some carnitas, fresh guacamole and of course a margarita or three! – Joe Trey, The Adventure Hermit. "Don't Go Anywhere ... Go Somewhere"

in 2008 I returned to the Grand Canyon astride a BMW r1200 GSA; this time to ride to the bottom courtesy of the Hualapai Tribe in Peach Springs, AZ. On the way, I met a fellow lover of distance riding and a story sharing; the multiple Iron Butt recipient Dale Strother. He was in the middle of riding his 2008 Anniversary Edition Harley Davidson across 50 states in 50 days because he had just turned 50. We

