



Terry's Travels

TT14-1 Biking in Mexico 19/10/2004

It was quite a rush to get ready to leave as usual but I sold my 1963 Royal Enfield on the night I left and managed a night out in down town Bingley with my daughter and son in law Chris and his brother and sister. Then an old pal phoned and came too - he used to ride speedway and now looks like becoming a main sponsor....

Any way I landed in Mexico City and took a local (risky!) taxi to my hotel - he went via back streets with HUGE sleeping policemen (road bumps called Topes in Mexico). The beaten up old VW Beetle scraped its underside over the worst ones but got me to the hotel in short time and got a generous 100 Pesos (8 quid). I risked a walk in the balmy air and found a dance hall with only a small cover charge but opted for being sensible with a beer and bed after some 22 hours travel from home.

Aero Mexico got me to Guadalajara and my friends Jerry and Sharon were there to drive me back to Lake Chapala where they live for some 8 months of the year, their other home being in Texas. I was immediately into the ritzy life by having lunch overlooking the Lake in the rich gringo town of Ajijic. It got even better when their lovely house overlooking the Lake had Speed TV and I saw the MGP and also the WSB (that's motorcycle racing). I was introduced to my motorcycle kindly loaned to me for the trip. A Kawasaki KL650 with a high saddle and suspension ready for riding rough tracks as well as roads. A great barbie and some beer and I was sleepy as well as excited. Around 2,000 miles planned in 8 days and altitudes from over 8,000 feet down to 1,800 in the deep canyons - yes SEVEN of them all bigger than the Grand Canyon.....

Terry, Creel, Mexico.





Terry's Travels

TT14-2 Copper Canyon 15/10/2004

It was no problem to get out of bed whilst the stars were still twinkling out of the inky sky over massive Lake Chapala. With the pair of KLR 650's packed we left Jerry's house (Jerry had lifted a picture hiding his wall safe to pack his pesos for the trip!) - his noisy exhaust making my bike seem silent in the early dawn. Brisk riding took us N towards the sprawling and fast growing major city of Guadalajara, it already has a population of some 7 million. The first rays of the sun caught the scratched visor of my open face Arai helmet which reminded me that it needs replacing. In tight convoy we continued N. We were almost 2 hours into the ride when we entered the mountains and great riding. I was feeling good on the KLR which runs 70mph nicely at 4,500rpm.

The first breakfast of Huevos a la Mexicana - scrambled eggs with ham, peppers and of course refried beans with hand made tortillas was a nice reward for the first 100 miles. We refuelled at 250 miles and after a hard on the bum (butt) 10 hours we were in Sombrerete N of Fresnillo. This old town has connections from the early 1500s and with silver mining. Interesting and friendly and with our bikes safely in a garage we ate dinner, drank some Tekate beer strolled around then slept.

The next day was the same - up before dawn and more interesting roads N to Parral. Menu del dia at 65 pesos (\$6US). Another stroll before an ice cream which made me feel that I was on holiday - it felt good.

We passed through several military checkpoints where the army checked us for dope and turned W towards the Copper Canyon wilderness area. At one checkpoint I heard a swarm of bees and Jerry quickly made sure they were Mexican and not the nasty African bees that are here also.

Around 600 miles covered and the riding was truly fantastic - quiet roads, quite good surfaces made to feel smooth by the KLR's long movement suspension - its 34 inch seat height makes getting your leg over a Pilates exercise.

Jerry hails from Corsicana Texas where he was a doctor and like me loves motorcycles and travel. One of his amusing comments is that OZ is like Texas - but with kangaroos. Now we were headed off-road some 65km down into one of the canyons, we were at over 8,000 feet and would drop to 1,800 feet. As I led the way down my jaw dropped when I first glimpsed the canyon. It was amazing. I could scarcely believe that it was me that was doing this. I concentrated on the rocky path with its drop offs thousands of feet down - ready to prove the gravity of any error.....



Terry - Melbourne (for Philip Island) OZ.



Terry's Travels

TT14-3 Mexican Indians 16/10/2004

I lead the way down into the canyon and saw a few brightly dressed Indians walking up and down. The ladies wear multiple skirts for warmth and storage. The scenery was so compelling to look at but yet I needed my full concentration for where to put the front wheel. When the Spanish invaded the Indians took to the hills for safety and have learned how to subsist in these scarcely fertile lands. My shoulders ached with steering and whilst 2nd gear was OK in many parts bottom gear early was needed on the steepest rough tracks. The rear wheel locked easily on the loose rocks and of course using the front was a no no. There was the occasional 4 wheel drive to avoid too. Eventually I crossed a rotted wooden bridge over the fast flowing river that showed we were near the bottom. I stopped and removed a few layers of clothing as now down around 1,800 feet the temperature was up from the 50,s to almost 90F.

People walk this route and some cycle down - the heroes cycle up, so we came upon a small shop alongside the river. A gas fridge provided a cold expensive drink and we continued. A grader had just been over this section and tiredness, heat and the unpacked dirt made the riding very tricky.

Batopilas village was primitive but it was great to arrive. We rode into the hotel -YES! - through the foyer, round the corner and down two lots of steps onto the secure patio overlooking the river. Jerry went for an instant beer - I felt the need of a shower to wash the dust and sweat away - then I went looking for him. I missed him and finished up seeing a squabble between a dog and a pig that lives in the dirty streets. I retraced my steps and a wizened old Mexican shouted 'companero'

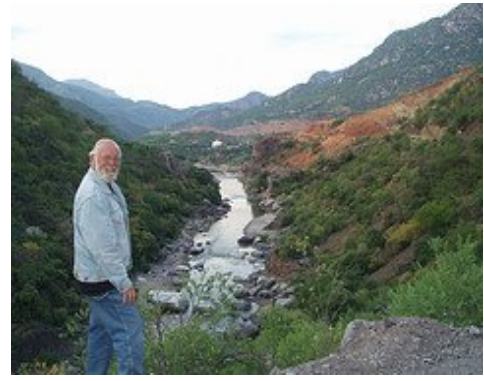
and I found Jerry having a Tecate overlooking the fast flowing river puzzling why a good looking blonde was there with a greasy looking Mexican in 24" bottoms. The things we guys talk about. The local children were playing in the river and played the game of floating down the rapids. Jerry had been here before and took us to look for a restaurant. My nose picked one and he confirmed that this was OK. It mentioned that it was by the swinging bridge - not any more since it got washed away in a flash flood.

The next dawn, before we checked out we rode the few km alongside the river to the end of the path. Some years before a mysterious and forgotten impressive church was found and whilst Roman Catholic the Vatican did not know about it. It is now known as the "Lost Cathedral". It is one of the most striking buildings I have ever seen due to the unique and isolated setting. In fact it gave me a feeling of similarity with Machu Piccu in the Andes. When I catch up with putting the photos on my website www.THinnco.uk you will see what I mean. Electricity will shortly reach this lost canyon and will change it forever. I felt excited to start the 65km ride up and out of



the canyon. Being refreshed, cooler and going upwards made it all seem so much easier. We stopped again at the little shop for bolony sandwiches and a veggie drink like V8. Somehow this combination tasted especially delicious. As a pal tells me - the best condiment is HUNGER. I sped ahead stopping to get photos of Jerry noisily powering upwards. I sped on and met another vehicle coming down - I was lucky to have a berm (pile of dirt) to keep me on the track - just. The 65km out were ridden quickly and I felt disappointed that this fantastic section was over. I should not have been because some exhilarating bend swinging was about to start.....

Terry - Melbourne, OZ.





Terry's Travels

TT14-4 Creel and Railroad 16/10/2004

The motorcycles were very dusty from the 130km of trail riding but we were now on quiet well surfaced bendy roads. Some of the dust blew off as Jerry let me be lead rider. I was swinging the bends confidently, amazed at the level of grip that the dual purpose tyres had as I revved through the scenic canyons. The whole area is very John Wayne - in fact he made many movies located in this region of Mexico.

We approached the small town of Creel and turned on a side road that took us to a splendid hotel overlooking another massive canyon. Perched right over the canyon we enjoyed a leisurely light lunch. We were now seeing more gringos since the railroad calls here. In fact Di and I were here some 15 years ago on a wagon train of RV's. After lunch and into Creel it was time to give our trusty steeds a bit of TLC. A car wash allowed Jerry to blast the chains (and me!) with the powerful jet. The KLR's needed a pint of Mobil1 and after the chains dried a squirt of PJ1 chain lubricant.

Jerry checked the tyres and showed me that my "chicken strips" were bigger than his. These are the bits of tread on the tyre edges that are not ridden on if you don't ride to the limit of lean on the tyres. I had swung the bends enthusiastically and CERTAINLY I had had a great days riding both on and off road. Another two guys on KLR's turned up for a couple of weeks adventure riding (see www.klr650.com) and they turned out to be homicide cops from Houston. We went for a beer and dinner with them enjoying some good conversation.

Creel is at an altitude of over 7,000 feet and was COLD pre dawn. We decided to breakfast at the hotel to allow the sun to warm things a little. A good decision since the ice was melting from the roofs. Today was going to be an easy day - a mere 6 hours in the saddle to Mexico's highest waterfall with a name something like Basseichi. I put on ALL the clothes I had and even my waterproof coat to stop the icy wind blast and two pairs of gloves (why is it I always want to pee when I have done this?). The pee stop confirmed that my hands were STILL cold.....

I was glad that Jerry was lead riding with his greater experience of the damp and icy bits in the shaded areas. A very ancient log cabin cafe run by two old Indian ladies provided some hot coffee. A tour bus came in and I got into conversation - mainly due to this Mexican's English rather than my lousy Spanish. His 70 year old sprightly pal was boastful of his fitness and when I asked if it was the ladies that kept him young he proudly showed a VIAGRA tablet

Terry - Melbourne, OZ.





Terry's Travels

TT14-6 Philip Island Grand Prix 21/10/2004

When I plan my Round The World ticket I look to have great 'stopovers'. Mexico was great and my next is based in Melbourne so that I can visit Philip Island for the penultimate round of the Moto GP. I used the City link (toll road) which quickly had me on the M1/M420 freeways to the bridge across to Philip Island. As I arrived at the circuit's ticket booth it was raining, hailing, howling and bloody cold. It relented so I put on my boots and paddled into the office to collect my tickets bought on the internet. This circuit is a natural one spectacularly located alongside the ocean and well favoured by the riders. I saw practice start on very wet roads and as always marvelled at what these guys can do. It dried and I heard again the magical sounds of the big bikes screaming around. I munched my sardine sandwiches and then walked around the entire circuit. The miserable buggers had staff controlling access to the grandstands even on this practice day meaning they were only a quarter full (yes I had bought only the cheapest 3 day ticket for about 45 pounds). All the major manufactures had displays too so it was a good day out.

Back in Melbourne for the night showed me a bustling city with a big Chinatown and a BIG traffic problem. My central hotel had valet parking and it was nice to walk around having dumped the car. Next morning I found one of the reasons it was so busy was that it was the Caulfield Cup weekend. This is similar to England's Ascot – all dressing up, boozing and having a flutter on the horses. A horse called Elvis was favourite and 'won for the money'. I walked to Flinders railway station to see the punters in creative head wear, impractical strappy high heel shoes and showing flesh. I got into the spirit of it all by having a half of "Beez Neez" opposite the station before using a Chinese owned efficient internet. I watched GP qualifying on the TV and also Shane Warne become the biggest world wide taker of wickets EVER! Australia was right to be proud. I checked out (how is it when they make a mistake on the bill it's always in THEIR favour?) and headed for the City Link – it was closed for road works – bummer – but I found my way by following the just rising sun. It was much quieter than I expected to get into the circuit again on this perfect day. The racing in the MGP was really thrilling and the 25 year old Valentino Rossi won and became 2004 World Champion. Di will be thrilled - she wears his T shirt when she watches on TV!! I felt lucky to witness it live. You can imagine 42,000 people now leaving an island with one bridge. I doubled back, visited Rhyll and went to a still packed Cowes looking for a bed. After quite a bit of searching I found an inscrutable old Chinese guy renting a garage like apartment with painted concrete floors. He spoke a little English – 'pay now , cash'. Cowes main street has many restaurants, fish shops and ice cream parlours with other shops that have been taken over for selling biker gear. There was one busy boozier overlooking



the bay. The police presence seemed over the top with mounted police too and it all seemed a bit restrained. I suppose that's because I've been to many wild European rounds so it was bound to feel a bit muted by comparison. I slept well and the TV and shower worked and I was quickly into the still busy main street. The Church was still doing hot \$8A breakfasts and as I was one of the last I got to sit with the 'workers' who told me that 30 of them had volunteered and had used 90 dozen eggs, 90 kilos of sausages with 100 loaves to feed the bikers. Uma remembered the race circuit when she was a girl back in the 1930's. Another lady told me that the bikers were a laugh – she had seen one stark naked who had climbed a concrete lighting pole – he lost control on coming down – OUCH.....

Leaving the busy main street I walked several miles of golden, quiet beach meeting just a few people, a few dolphins, but millions of small crabs. With more time I could have seen the penguins and the cuddly koalas. That earned me a cappuccino in the lovely sunshine before I headed for Melbourne Airport and my first experience of a Formule 1 Hotel (cheap) at just \$59A and could have slept 3 – I knew that Chinese guy had stiffed me.

Terry – 'The Cut' Nelson, NZ.



Terry's Travels

TT14-7 'Home' in Nelson 28/10/2004

There scarcely seemed time to drink my tea in the three and a half hour flight from Melbourne to Auckland after the much longer legs I had flown. I had booked my ticket on the internet to get to Nelson and I just put the credit card I used to book with into the reader which then issued my boarding pass - very efficient.

My pal Malcolm was waiting at the airport even though I got in a bit early -just 10 minutes later we were in the 'Lawyer' having a Boddingtons. It was dark when he dropped me at my house but it felt fantastic - even the pool felt warm considering that it is just Spring here. The joy of seeing blossoms and tropic trees next morning was wonderful. My theory of a trickle charger on a battery for a month at a time had not worked on my vehicles and my house sitter had brought his charger to boost them. The bottom line was a couple of new batteries and a volt meter that was accurate. Now Bonnie (the Triumph Bonneville) the Saab convertible and my trusty Beemer (the 1978 BMW 800/7) are all running. I even have plans to be a bit more legal by getting NZ plates for the old Beemer - I will tell you how that goes but it all starts with de registering it in England and having a Bill of Lading.....

I finished reading "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown, he along with Lee Child had been excellent travel companions. Everyone said it had been a wet winter here and certainly the countryside looks lush. I brought the sun for a few days and then sod's law brought the rain back for the holiday weekend. I took my newly bought (in OZ Duty Free) Driza-Bone coat for a three hour walk in the rain up the Maitai River and the oilskin did its stuff. In the 1890's a Scottish sailor by the name of Edward Le Roy discovered that the torn sails could be plied with oils and made effective coats.

I needed to change my address here at the Westpac Bank - I meet different ladies who make differing recommendations for the type of account I should be using. It seems to make little difference but this morning I got an appointment to see the advisors on the floor above. There seems to be better 'crumpet' (totty-sheilas-skirt) - you know I write to several countries - up here, so it was a pleasant visit. There even seems to be a chance of a FREE account if it is pension money feeding it - now THAT would impress me.....

Terry - Nelson, South Island, NZ.



Terry's Travels

TT14-8 "Rainmaker" 05/11/2004

I have had several phone calls to my house to arrange 'Tango lessons' (Chris – my house sitter – gives dance lessons) – it suddenly struck me that it was ladies that were ringing – perhaps it's a 'code' for a rather more intimate service? My dream world is quite a pleasant place, so when I was driving through the Lewis Pass on my way to see my pal in Ashburton I found that each time I put the top down on my car it rained. After three times of achieving rain I think I should now be able to add "Rainmaker" to my very extensive CV.

My pal Andy had been displaying huge combined harvesters at the Ashburton agricultural show and left early Sunday morning to arrange their return to his companies HQ. Would I like a ride? – YOU BETCHA. So there I was sitting in the instructional seat alongside Tony the engineer in the Case 8510 – a mere half a million dollar machine with 440hp and a giant 30 foot cut. The space age cab is like an upmarket car with panoramic vision, air con and good hi-fi. You can have Satellite Navigation accurate to a few inches feeding a computer that gives yields so you can fine tune irrigation also to inches – mind boggling – I shall think about it every time I eat my Weetabix.

We headed to the road with Tony at the wheel and joystick. My seat was fixed and Tony had hydraulic cushioning. The effect was him going up and down about 18 inches as if on a pogo stick whilst we chatted. I asked how long the course was to learn to operate the harvester and his laconic reply was 'a lot of drinking'. He told me the maximum speed was 32.4kph and we were quickly doing this speed with him blasting the horn in town to get his pal out of bed (perhaps he said off the nest).

We returned for a 'small' harvester, the front wheel just reaches to my head. He had 'hot wired' this for more speed and at 2450rpm it bowled us back at 38kph with its 290hp diesel. How could I ever be satisfied with a mere motorcycle?

The answer is I got my leg over Roddy and went with Andy and Jenny on their unique Excelsior-Henderson and headed for the snow capped mountains. We had an excellent outdoor lunch at Methven which is a ski resort in winter. What a most wonderful day out – I even cleaned Roddy to welcome him to New Zealand.....

Terry - "The Cut" Tahunanui, Nelson, NZ.