

QUIT THE DAY JOB

Kurt Stauffer is a man who loves nature, motorcycling and making people happy. Maybe that's why his touring business Twincruiser Tours has flourished



THE DREAM

Kurt grew up in the 1960s in the rural Romandie part of Switzerland and, with plenty of time and space to ride with local teenagers, he became an accomplished rider and keen mechanic by the age of 13.

Kurt describes how he and his friends would ride on the unsurfaced local roads, "sometimes reaching speeds of up to 50mph!"

A remarkable speed considering that the young Swiss was on a low-powered but illegally de-limited Mofa motorcycle.

Kurt and his brother were fortunate enough to know a farmer who allowed them to ride on his land. After life on hairdryers, *Easy Rider* changed it all.

"I daydreamed about riding Captain America's bike [from the film] and saved like mad to buy one. Each coin I earned would go into the Harley piggybank. Having a drink with friends, going out and holidays were all scratched from my wish list. I had only one ambition: to own a Harley-Davidson."

But the Harley was still some time away, and so Kurt persevered with his outlaw machines.

"We used to spend hours over the weekends adapting pistons, cylinders, carburettors and pinions. It was our way of breaking the rules at the time."

Bigger and more powerful bikes followed: a BMW R50, a BSA A10 Road Rocket and a Norton Commando with a Manx engine – all of which Kurt remembers fondly.

He and his friends had a particular love for the British machines.

"We respected them and loved to ride them."

Kurt made his dream a reality in 1974 when he emigrated to South Africa and bought himself a Harley-Davidson Sportster. He worked part-time as a game ranger and spent the following few years adventure biking which took him all over the world.

"My Harley and I drove many roads from dirt and sand to tar all over South Africa," he remembers fondly. "We travelled through Lesotho, Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Botswana, Rhodesia and South West Africa. I slept in tents, cooked for myself, and made my own Tbags (tail packs) from leather."

THE SEED IS SOWN

"I'd joined various motorcycle clubs in Switzerland and South Africa and been to rallies and ride-outs with them. Camping, parties, drinks and smoking didn't appeal to me; I couldn't identify with that. I just wanted to explore different countries with my motorcycle, places close to nature where you can feel the wind and smell the flowers and trees, so I began searching for unusual routes."

Kurt started planning rides for his various clubs. He organised ride-outs and tours with various themes and points of historical and natural interest.

"Each tour had a name or a theme like 'Searching for the caveman', 'Snake and spider tour' or 'tracking the elephant trail'. People loved





it; they wanted to discover these places more deeply, and a new reason to ride was born."

His rides became so popular that he became Road Captain and Tour Director at his club.

ACTION STATIONS!

Kurt was back in Switzerland in 2010 and, with his wife Wil, started to build the idea for his biking business.

"I'd had the vision for my tours for many years, but there was a lot to do to get Twincruiser Tours up and running," he explains. "I wanted to offer motorcyclists the chance to see different places and people, so they weren't just riding from A to B and missing everything in between. I wanted people to enjoy the experience of a country's customs, attractions and nature from a new perspective."

"In the beginning, it was hard. Many tours were done at a loss, but each time I was richer and wiser for the experience."

That experience allowed Kurt to refine and hone the Twincruiser Tours formula, using lesser-known roads with breathtaking scenery and small, exclusive, family-run hotels serving up fresh local cuisine. Soon his all-inclusive luxury tour packages began to grow in popularity and Twincruiser Tours was ready to expand.

HE'S GOT THE WHOLE WORLD...

"I search for special or historic restaurants and hotels, meet the owners and staff, stay in the rooms, try out the pool and spa, taste the meals, visit the pubs and chat to the locals. To quote Oscar Wilde: 'I have the simplest tastes. I am always satisfied with the best.'"

The company now offers tours in France, Italy, Croatia, Istria, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, Scotland, South Africa and, of course, Switzerland.

"The most challenging tours are definitely the Alpine tours," he smiles. "Many riders underestimate them. Difficulties arise mainly

due to the endless hairpin bends, the altitude and sometimes the drastically changing weather conditions. Most popular are our private tours with just two to three riders. My favourite kind of tour is any when the weather plays along, the participants are motivated and I can surprise them and make them happy. I love meeting all sorts of people and characters while being outside, surrounded by nature. South Africa is really nice for that reason: daily sunshine and unique wildlife and nature."

"All our tours are suitable for men and women," he says, "although we do offer a nine-day ladies-only Bike and Wellness Tour, with duty-free shopping in two cities and spa treatments alongside spectacular riding."

"Each tour is first planned on a map according to the points of interests in that place and then entered into the GPS."

Before each tour, he rides the route and checks for road works, adapting the route where needed. He also scopes out shortcuts and motorways in case of really bad weather as well as handy information such as the location of mechanics, doctors, hospitals and police.

On some tours, Kurt enlists the help of local riders with an intimate knowledge of the area.

"We travel deeply, not just seeing more of everything, but offering a unique, quality experience," says Kurt. "I cannot know everything about an area; I need to rely on locals. Our local guides are familiar with their regions and can explain it in far better detail than I could. It's also my way of supporting local businesses and giving clients a close encounter with the people living there."

CUSTOMER SERVICE

"The challenge is always to please our customers at an affordable price. The downside is that sometimes people are unappreciative or want the impossible."

It's frustrating when bike owners spend a five-figure amount on their machine and then want a top-quality motorcycle holiday for as little as possible."

"On a perfect day, I wake up to the whistling of birds long before the sun rises. I have an outdoor shower, get dressed and meet the clients. Together we ride into the sun along a road that follows a river or a canyon and stop for breakfast in a little café and watch the sun rise. Then cruise along a road that follows the sea and look out for dolphins and whales, and much later, reach the bush camp where a herd of elephant is there to welcome us."

So, who better to have running your tour than a man with a passion for the natural world as well as his clientele? •

twincruiser-tours.com