

Ian Coates



Honorary BMAC member-for-life Ian Coates likes to say 'I went out for milk one day, stayed gone for 14 years, forgot the milk'.

The truth is only slightly less crazy.

Ian is a mechanic, and a collector of old bikes, Land Rovers and Willys jeeps. In 1999, he flew to South Africa to drive back an old WW2-era Land Rover.

The project fell apart; they got stuck in Kenya because, no kidding, the Eritrean/Ethiopian War and the second Sudanese Civil War. The people he was traveling with all bailed, and he drove back to South Africa, left the Rover, and had his wife ship him his 1991 Africa Twin. This was in 1999.

He rode through 14 countries in Africa that year, as well as several in Western Europe, before returning home in 2000. By then he had the bug.

In 2000 he learned he could have a bike shipped to Australia for £350. So he did. He spent 2-3 years touring Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania before shipping his bike to Argentina. Then he spent a couple of years touring ten countries in South America, as well as Trinidad & Tobago for good measure.

From there he arranged passage on a sailing ship to get through the Canal and be dropped in Panama City ... but wound up hiring on as the ship's engineer and sailed back to New Zealand, picking up at least a dozen Pacific Island nations.

He finally got off again when the ship went back to Panama, seeing seven countries in Central America before visiting the US, Canada, and Alaska.

Having finished Tierra del Fuego to Prudhoe Bay, obviously it was time to ship the bike to Vladivostok. He tried to get into China but they wouldn't let him, so he crossed Russia, toured 28 countries in Europe, and finally returned home to England again in 2013.