



Am I good enough to do it?

Have a chat with me and I'll help you decide. No point you coming along if you are not prepared to ride long days. This is possibly the greatest of all biking adventures and needs careful consideration before you want to or are allowed to sign up. Most riders are better than they think they are. In my view it's a mental thing and if you think you're able to do it you usually can.

Is it going to be really hard?

If you can ride 380 on good roads miles each day for 7 or 8 weeks then job done! Some days will be less when we are off-road, other days might go up to 450 miles. If you're overweight, unfit, unfocused and unprepared you won't make it. If you have looked at your diet, recreational habits, are prepared to get fitter and have taken your preparation seriously, you should accomplish this journey.

Do I bring my own bike or use a Nick Sanders bike?

Personal choice. Most riders prefer to use their own and some will keep it forever as a souvenir of an amazing journey. Some riders prefer not to put so many miles on their own bike and so reduce the resale price. Our bikes are brand new Yamaha XT 660's and you are welcome to use one of them.

What about food?

We pay for breakfasts and you sort out lunches and dinners. Food during the day is your decision but I will be recommending road-side food as the best for this project as it's cheap, hot, generally safe and nutritious. Dinners are usually together in a restaurant, unless you choose otherwise and unless we are camping.

How much camping will there be?

Not much and only when there are no hotels or if the schedule's temporarily gone to pot. Some riders, like me, hate tented accommodation, others feel it a necessary part of the expedition experience but rarely we will have no choice. Sometimes there will be no hotels for miles and when a tent is better than some of the crummy accommodation that might be on offer, that is when our tents will be used. Again and again I will remind you that this is not a Thomas Cook tour. It's a hard journey and only the keenest need apply. If you want to say you've been on the *toughest journey in the world*, a night under canvas now and then should be the least of your concerns. Account for a max 10% of the trip under canvas.

What's the accommodation like?

Think 2 star hotels with occasional gems thrown in from time to time. The usual hotel will be good and clean but I also know of fabulous hotels in places such as Tilcara, Uyuni, Cuenca, Cayambe, Granada, Oaxaca and obviously know a few in the USA. Such hotels are the rewards of a lot of hard work and will be sprinkled throughout the route. One promise I do make is that if it exists, you'll get a clean bed and hot shower.



Who are the support crew?

Well there will be myself, **Nick Sanders**, riding all of the way from Buenos Aires to Alaska. After 7 circumnavigations and more, I know a thing or two about adventure touring.

Dr Caroline Taylor is one of the most experienced GP's in South London and after 27 years of having dealt with people, most of whom are decidedly bonkers, has decided all she wants is to do expeditionary medicine and ride her bike with real bikers.

Jim Wolfe runs a European-wide haulage business, transports for the UN and is an expert in logistics. He will drive the back-up vehicle and will deal with the mechanicing. Both Jim and Caroline have worked with me on Timbuktu expeditions. **Erik Thompson** is my local Argentinian guide who will help us through the South American section.

What happens if I break down?

We will do everything we can to fix your bike. We will stay up all night to keep you on the road. Either we work with it until it's either fixed or until regrettably we feel nothing more can be done. If there is a dealership nearby we will take you there but we are on a schedule so it may be a few days before this might happen. Prevention is better than the cure.

What happens if I don't want to continue?

I doubt this would happen. We are great bikers with bags of experience and understand the perils of being away from home. We are a team and you will be pleasantly surprised how anyone I select to ride on this trip will help each other out. If whilst in South America you do want to pack up and we can't make you feel better, we would be very sad to lose you and you would have to return to Buenos Aires with my guide and back-up vehicle. After that you will have to arrange to fly or ship your bike home at your expense or if in the USA, you could ride directly to New York to our shippers or allow me to arrange bike transport on your behalf.

What happens if we don't want you to continue?

You'd have to be very naughty! Anything that contravenes local laws – dangerous riding, riding in such a way to endanger life, carrying contraband of any sort – and we'd have to have a little discussion. It's three strikes and you are out. Let's hope that doesn't happen. No one wants any single person upsetting the dynamics of the whole group. A contract will be signed by both parties, but everyone selected to ride on this project will be known by myself and hand-picked. We are on the same team, so it's going to be ok.



PAN-AMERICAN HIGHWAY EXPEDITION



What if I crash?

If we can fix the bike we will. If we can't we will find a dealer or bike shop on route that can and take it there. We will move mountains to keep you riding. But, if it's a right-off, then I'm afraid there is nothing more we can do and unless you buy another second-hand bike to keep you going, you will have to leave.

What if I get hurt?

Doctor Taylor will be on hand armed with splints and bandages and a first class medical kit. Whilst it is tempting to ask Dr C for a full consultation when you only have a headache, believe me, she is one of the best GP's in the business and knows exactly what to do when she is needed. If you require some hospitalisation then if it's just an overnight, we'll be there for you. Anything worse and your mandatory travel and medical repatriation insurance will have to kick in, whereby they will fly you home.

Who sorts out punctures?

You do. You bring your own plugs (or inner-tubes) and deal with it as it happens.

How does this expedition compare with the others?

You never criticise good competition and I say good luck to them. However, their trips are longer and correspondingly more expensive. £19 000 to do what you can do with me for £7850 is an awful big difference. For that kind of money you can do 3 or 4 major expeditions instead of just one! *Get the brochures. Do a cost comparison. Compare like for like. Read the small print.* Not only are they more costly to do but when you consider how much time you might have to take off work, or give up your job completely, it becomes a life-time decision. Horses for courses I suppose and sure, you don't get the time off to hang around as with the other companies, but my trip is for hardy bike riders who just want to ride their bikes. This is a project designed to offer a real challenge. ***It does not pretend to be hard, it is hard.*** Anyone who has been on one of my journeys knows how difficult some days are, but they will also testify how amazing a good challenging adventure can be.

What do I get for my money?

£7850 is a lot but it's not £19 000. We even include all your flights, unbelievably, the others do not. We include hotels, breakfasts, a back-up vehicle with the best possible crew, a hugely experienced local guide and in the true tradition of expeditions, a travelling doctor. And the best bit, you ride with me?!! On reflection...that might not be the best bit, but put it this way, with my experience of riding around the world, there is not a problem I have ever come across that can not be resolved.



PAN-AMERICAN HIGHWAY EXPEDITION



What else do I get for my money?

Ah, well, as you know I have the support of some really excellent sponsors. Hein Gericke, Carole Nash, Yamaha and Continental Tyres all believe in their customers, so trust me to get some heavily discounted clobber for you to road test. No promises but I could save you a few hundred quid.

Will I get the chance to meet the other riders before we go?

Yes, there will be several get-to-gethers, including dinners and plenty of opportunities to sort out the detail of what tyres to use, what to pack and how to prepare.

Who sorts out the paperwork?

We do everything except deal with insurances. You sort out your travel insurance which must include repatriation and you sort out any 3rd party insurances that we can get at the borders (of course we are there to help) but everything else is down to us.

What's the right kind of bike?

The one you like and feel comfortable riding. But there are a few considerations that need mentioning. 10% of the journey is off-road and whilst not severe, is corrugated with some loose surfaces but very little sand. That does mean 90% of the trip is on good to excellent highways. Please don't automatically go for what looks the part. The latest BMW GS series are not known to be faultless. Go for something light. British or Japanese. A Yamaha XT or Tenere could be offered by Yamaha at a discounted price.

How much luggage shall I take and who carries it?

As little as possible and you carry it all, every brass knocker bit of it. This is an expedition and to maintain its and your credibility, the Pan-Americana is designed with true adventurers in mind and not a Thomas Cook tour for nervous people.