

ROAD TRIP

Jarmo Korhonen – Road Marshal and Life Member of the Johannesburg Chapter in South Africa – reports on a unique African continental journey powered by Milwaukee steel...

This 'Big 5' touring ride included 45 people from different nationalities: Australia, Canada, Brazil, UK, Finland, Germany, Malta, Poland, Turkey, the US and South Africa – all experiencing something totally unique in sunny Africa. Is there anything better than the expectation of a great journey? Doing it, and perhaps later remembering some of those great moments come close to it.

It was somewhere in Limpopo where a tourist stood next to my bike and said to me 'that's an awesome way to see Africa'. Although being such a mean biker, I had to agree with this dude who expressed our intentions with such justification.

After a long journey it was a very emotional experience for all of us finally to see Victoria Falls. Our fellow explorer Dr David Livingstone from Edinburgh, Scotland wrote it years earlier: "No one can imagine the beauty of the view from anything witnessed in England. It had never been seen before by European eyes; but scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight."

There is no hurry in Africa; we covered 6,250km in three weeks, including Cape Town and Cape Agulhas, the most southern tip of Africa. After the southern coast and Transvaal some new members joined the team in Durban and the trip continued to the Royal Kingdom of Swaziland, Kruger National Park in Mpumalanga and the Drakensberg Mountains.

An official Harley on Safari weekend was spent in Sun City and the trip continued to Zambia via Botswana. The tour crossed the Zambezi River in Kasane toward the Victoria Falls. Some potholes were spotted on the

way in northern Botswana together with scenic sights where ever we went. We got full approval from all people everywhere, because people here pay respect to beautiful machines. This cheerful attitude affected our team during the trip – I even found myself greeting other bikers that weren't on Harleys.

In the mid-1990s I met Merle Vandersluis from Michigan while we were working in Ethiopia and I found his attitude towards life different from other bikers. He had a Harley back in the US and we used to make off-road expeditions in the jungles close to Aira Hospital looking for hippos and crocodiles. We rode tracks made by men and elephants and crossed unnamed rivers.

There were other bikers and Harley riders in Ethiopia as well at that time, such as Jerry Giles from Wichita and his father Ray Giles who seriously considered bringing his Harley into the country. We used motorbikes for explorations among the Surma and Suri people, where Presbyterians John and Gwen Haspels were unselfishly working among the forgotten tribes of Africa close to the border of Sudan. Ladies of the tribe there wear earthen or wooden plates on their lower lips to show the 'value' of women. The bigger the lip plate is, the more cows and goats you have to pay to marry her.

None of us could get Harleys there and I wonder how many cows are equivalent to one Harley, but after having the privilege of knowing these great people working there I promised to myself that when possible I will buy a Harley and see the rest of the world in the spirit of freedom, as I have seen so little so far. That's how Africa works. First you know everything and then maybe just a little bit. Finally you have to

admit that you know nothing yet.

The magic of old Africa may already be gone forever, but Cape Town has always been a good place to start expeditions. This applies to H.O.G. and all the other expeditions and settlements in the history of Africa including the Great Trek of the Dutch farmers called Boers, 'Voortrekkers', in the early 1800s. It has been said that Cape Town is one of the most beautiful cities on Earth. The Table Mountain and Cape Town's beaches are world famous. Table Mountain is sometimes covered with clouds, but the city is always surrounded by full-time jazz. In contrast, Robben Island reminds tourists about the past. To all H.O.G. wine enthusiasts, the Stellenbosch and Robertson valleys are places to go on the way out from Cape on rental Harleys. Also worth seeing is the Knysna lagoon on the way through Transkei to the south coast. Joseph and Corinne Gerada from Malta said that they have 30km of tarmac in Malta if you travel one direction – our safari tour did 10 times that on day one. Moreover, I am sure Joe enjoyed his 50th birthday on the road riding his rental Harley in Africa since the road conditions in the Republic of South Africa are excellent, and there are interesting places and breathtaking views.

In Cape Agulhas two oceans meet. There is a stone at the most southernmost tip of the continent of which the left-hand side is on the Indian Ocean and the right-hand side is on the Atlantic Ocean. Last time I was there we saw whales playing in the sea. The village there is a perfect location for a South African 'braai' – a typical South African barbecue – under the night skies.

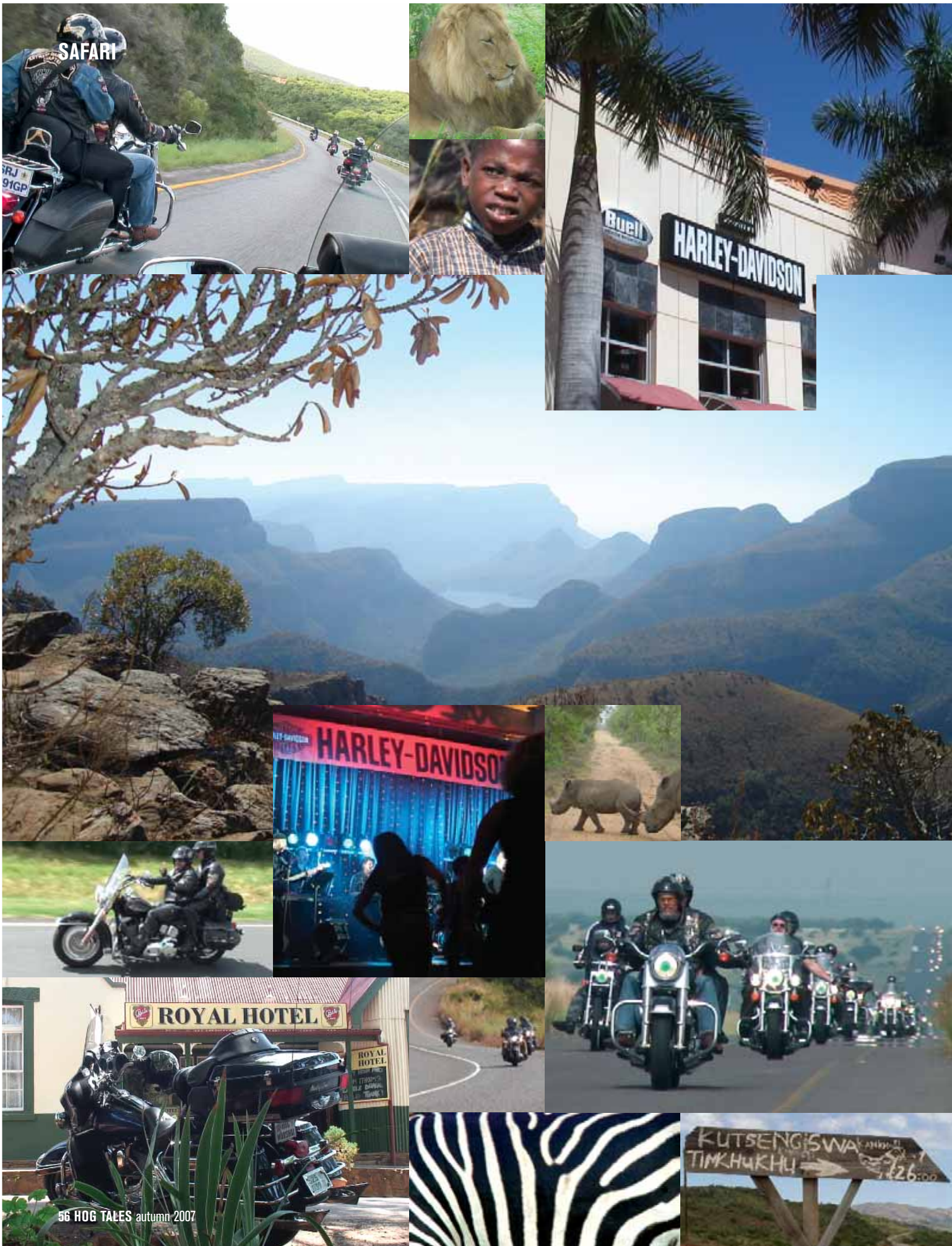
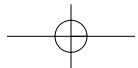
We had a day off in Durban and went for a swim. The waves were bigger than I remembered, but I swam anyway. A day later we heard that in that area they'd had the most destructive high tide in living memory together with storms destroying beaches and houses. No wonder the waves looked a bit high to this posse highlander.

Team Poland did the Safari in Polish. We eventually learnt some polish like, "nigdy nie zagasnie (pronounce: neegdy kniee zagashkniee)." In short I think this means "cheers" in English. Well done Karpacz.

Our friends Gunther and Ilona Kranz »»



Harley on safari



ROAD TRIP

from Germany took pictures on the way for the ABCs of Touring competition. Once, close to Pretoria, I was sweeping in the back, stopping in front of him and waiting for him to join the pack again. I must have blinked my eyes, because we lost him completely and I couldn't find him until the next stop where we had a braai. There we ate boerewors sausages and biltong, wondering what really happened.

It was an absolute pleasure to be part of a group where all the ladies always looked as if they had stepped out of the pages of a fashion magazine, as H.O.G. Pretoria member Henri Raubenheimer said quite diplomatically. His many observations and comments along the expedition made the rest of us see the most joyful aspects of this safari, and we enjoyed every single day.

During the last third of the tour we passed many elephants and got undivided attention from all kinds of local inhabitants; rhinos, giraffes, fish eagles, crocodiles and hippos were spotted during the posse tour, specifically on the riverboat cruise from Mowana Safari Lodge in Chobe National Park. Peace and quiet was short-lived for the unfortunate elephants on the banks of the river as a lightning flash hit the trees next to the herd and scared the animals.

Our tour leader Mike Wood gave us some good advice prior to meeting elephants on the Harley. One useful one was not to challenge them! Along the road my wife spotted an elephant on the left-hand side of the road and I went back to see it again. It was huge and winged its ears in the midday heat as if it was willing to take off and fly using that 100km straight road as a runway.

In the evenings we enjoyed several braai in fenced areas with traditional dancers as well as African music. That was always a good end to another day in Africa after hundreds of kilometres of riding behind us. We did some rides to beautiful Pilgrim's Rest, God's Window, the real big Pot Holes, Blyde River Canyon and other beautiful places in the northern mountains of Drakensberg in South Africa.

I wondered why some posse riders came out of the helicopter flip around the Victoria

Falls hugging each other and looking so happy. Surely it wasn't because of the flight? It was later discovered that John Berardo, a global US citizen working in Saudi Arabia, had proposed to Anne Keats during the flight. She proudly carried an Australian flag during the posse ride.

The sightseeing was stunning too, as our Turkish H.O.G. members Taner and Carol Celik witnessed with enthusiasm.

We also did several night, afternoon and morning game drives on the trip, especially in Kruger National Park, seeing a lot of African wild animals.

None of us had any real problems during the adventure. We had two backup vehicles;

"The great journey of a lifetime"

one carrying a trailer full of luggage driven by Mike's wife Marietjie, an experienced H.O.G. touring lady herself, and another vehicle was driven by our professional technicians from SA Gauteng Harley dealerships with a trailer and a spare bike.

It was probably the best moment ever for the local pizza delivery boy riding his scooter as he joined our Harley pack on the busy streets of Gaborone in Botswana where all of us were riding in a tight and perfect staggered formation. He joined and kept his position in the pack in the midst of the dense cloud of burning and smoking oil coming out from the pipe of his scooter. It was definitely one of those moments when you wished you had a camera with you.

Maybe one of the most meaningful memories for us was the stop somewhere in Zambia where my wife Saara gave apples, among other things, to the local children as gifts - these little ones did not know what to do with them. We only wished we had more apples stashed away to give to them.

Here in Africa we can never close our eyes to poverty. It was an extraordinary event for the kids of the village to see for the first time in their lives the shiny chrome machine of Harley making a lot of noise.

This extra stop in the village where the church was made of sticks and mud and covered by a broken grass roof should be seen in the context of hunger where children suffer every day. Every minute of every day, somewhere in the world, 21 children die of malnutrition and curable diseases. A lot of African people are fighting for survival, but on that day there was a smile on the faces of these kids.

After dinner, finally we were on the highway back to the crowded streets of the city of Johannesburg, also known by the name of "Egoli", place of gold. My tour and duty call for marshalling ended here. The South African style of marshalling is to block all crossroads with robots on green so that fellow riders at the back do not need to stop, worry about other traffic or put their feet down. It's a very safe and efficient way for all involved.

We left many good moments behind us together with the rain showers in Botswana where 'pula', which literally means rain, is a blessing and also the name of the currency of the country. We left our 'pulas' in numerous fuel stations in Southern Africa along our expedition and gained much more than memories, fellowship and good lifetime friends. We truly gained blessings from Africa through our hard work and we will carry those blessings with us for the rest of our lives as they undoubtedly belong to all brave 2007 Harley on Safari Posse Riders.

We truly respect those H.O.G. family members scattered all over the world who have shared the Harley on Safari Posse Ride, the great journey of a lifetime. These are souls soaring free on the wings of eagles. We have learnt something. If you have ever wanted to change anything in Africa you'd better forget it, because Africa will change you. ■

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