

 **Rider's Report**  
Horizons Unlimited Travelers Meeting



Iain and Debz show us around their RTW sidecar, teaching us what's necessary and what is not.



Carla King and ??



If stickers were age lines, this rider must be in his 90s!



Ted Simon and Gregory Frazier.



# The Wander Club

Backpackers On Wheels Unite

BY ALFONSE PALAIMA

**A**sk a traveler where to go on vacation, and he will first ask what you like to do, then maybe make some suggestions. But where does someone that travels for a living — with an extreme obsession — go when he wants a vacation, from vacationing? Not so oddly, he travels some more, but this time, when he gets there, he parks the bike instead of riding it.

If riding Iron Butts are your thing, or you're the type of rider that's just getting warmed up on the sixth day of a ride, then the idea of chasing horizons is no strange thing to you. You might even know that with the right amount of effort, the horizon never comes, like a tomorrow, it's endless — unlimited. "Does the smell of spices wafting through the air make you think of Zanzibar?" asks Grant Johnson, founder of Horizons Unlimited. "Does the cacophony of honking horns remind you of Cairo? Do you see Guatemala in a swirl of brilliantly patterned clothing? Then the Horizons Unlimited (HU) web site, [HorizonsUnlimited.com](http://HorizonsUnlimited.com), is the place for you!"

You might've already heard of this site. It's a place online as well as in the hearts and minds — and the well-worn rear tires — of its members. It's an online forum for some, and a way of life for others. Much more than just a bulletin board and storefront peddling traveler goods and must-read books, it's an invaluable source of information for riders of all skill level and in want of escape. It's also a source for some of the best friends you'll ever have, on or offline. Beyond a database of world travelers, blogs, and tech tips, the HU web site also brings this fantasyland to life with traveler gatherings around the world.

A few years ago, I rode to Panama on my KLR with a member of the group not knowing anything about the web site or its members. More recently, I reconnected with fellow moto-journalist Carla King, and she suggested I check out the upcoming event, conveniently located within a few hours from home, in Cambria, California. No major investment on my part — not this time anyway — to meet the people and see what happens at their meetups.

This year's location (as it was last year) was the Camp Ocean Pines, a Monterey Pine forest overlooking the Pacific Ocean.



## ...so many intriguing people, stories and places to ride. My future is booked!

As I often do when riding north to the Bay Area, I take the long way there. Slipping out of Los Angeles on my trusty KLR, through Ojai, over the greater roads and out to the coast, this time I had a new helper along for the ride, a MAD MAPS map covering the scenic roads of Southern California. Slingshotting like a Mars-bound satellite along portions of five different circuits with names like Is this Europe of SoCal? and Paso Robles, the Hot Way, guidance and points of interest always help to make a journey more memorable. It's never too late to learn of a good road, and with a traveler convention on my horizon, I thought there was no better a time to see what the map had to offer.

Camping along the central California coast for a weekend, meeting other people who ride to escape, explore, and learn sounds like a perfect place for me. Fully catered and chock-a-block with lectures from other attending riders, the admission price was right and the details were enticing, so I joined the club and signed up for the weekend. Little did I know that I would be inundated by so many intriguing people, stories, and places to ride. My future is booked!

One of the best features of HU gatherings like this one is meeting people you read about in magazines and online in the flesh. One couple that attended this year's meeting in Cambria, Iain Patterson and Debbie Simpson, is currently riding around the world in a BMW sidecar rig. Members since about 2006, blogging and posting for years, their current journey is six months in the making, and after a few weeks of catching up to their journey online, I was able to meet with them and their bike in person to hear their story, shake their hands, and smell the life on the road in their clothing... strangely exciting stuff if you're a wanderer too. Warning: the journey is contagious!

Travel guidebook and adventure motorcycle author Christopher Baker has got me hooked on the idea to ride in Cuba with a MotoDiscovery tour he's leading in 2013, the only motorcycle touring company granted license by the US Department of Treasury to lead US citizens in the country. Having written *Mi Moto Fidel*, *Motorcycling Castro's Cuba*, published by *National Geographic Travel*, and penned numerous Moon and other guides to Central America, Barbados, and so on, he's the man to follow!



Craig Vetter's highly-modified Honda Helix.



Reg Kittrele, ??, and ??



Writer Clement Salvadori entertained us with a story about crossing Tibet on an Enfield 500. Author of *Motorcycle Adventurer – Carl Stearns Clancy: First Motorcyclist To Ride Around The World*, and world traveler himself, Gregory Frazier took us around the world six times in his skin-clad presentation. Sandy, Terry, and Jack Borden, aka the Adventure Trio showed us that touring the world with a child is the most rewarding experience ever, personally rearing a future generation of thinkers and travelers. And guy dressed like Charlie Brown (Cliff Danger) showed us a slideshow of the best way through Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos on a Minsk, making art along the way. The grandfather of motowanderers and author of *Jupiter's Travels*, Ted Simon, headlined the weekend's speakers with a story about his youth and escaping in any way possible. The list goes on with too many names to list here, with topics beyond travel as well, like motorcycle rescue, camp food, fuel economy, and even photo composition on the road. Many of the presenters were writers and had published books to increase your passion for travel and a raging machine. Others still were just riders with stories and/or tips to share — each and every one as valuable as the next!

This meeting was lucky to have the famous “Mr. WindJammer,” Craig Vetter, in attendance thanks to the proximity to his home in Carmel. He and his wife, Carol, hopped on their modestly sized machines and blazed a path down the PCH to regale us with stories about the Vetter fairing history, motorcycle aerodynamics, his annual Fuel Economy Challenge and the motorcycles getting 140-plus mpg! This self-made entrepreneur and giant in motorcycling design and aerodynamics of the '60s to present day sat down amongst riders of all shapes, sizes, and type in a living room gathering to share his passion. He was the highlight of my weekend; I think. With lectures slated for three stages, over three full days and not many repeat performances, I barely had time to chow between mind-expanding sessions!

Never before had I gone to a motorcycle rally and not toured the local roads with attendees! Even if you didn't come to hear people tell stories, the bikes in the parking lot could tell their own stories. More than a few times over the course of the weekend, I poured my

attention over the bikes, looking for new products and ways of getting my stuff down the road. Along with a few vendors and magazines in the same area, hours could be spent in the central hub of the camp itself just meeting friends, old and new, and their bikes.

Event hosts Grant and Susan Johnson are veteran motorcycle travelers of course, having ridden around the world two-up on a 1986 BMW R80 G/S, visiting more than 50 countries (and counting) and making friends in every single one of them. Even if you never plan to

attend a traveler gathering, their web site is an invaluable resource for travelers of any kind. One attendee I met this weekend had ridden her bicycle around the world, twice!

When the motorcycling book club meeting was over, it was time to take all that recently magnified wanderlust home, and while I know the quickest way home, what fun would it be to just hop on the 101 and rip back to the South Bay? None. So I check on that MAD map once again. Adventure was just a folded piece of paper away. **RB**