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TOURING AMERICA

AMA Members Find Great Rides And Destinations From Coast To Coast

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DESERT DUAL SPORT

Following Familiar Ground To Motorcycling Nirvana

By John Gil

"So how was your weekend?"

It's a fair question.

I like to think that for those of us who spent the previous two days riding our motorcycles, we simply say something about going on a bike ride, then drift into a pleasant daydream of a moto highlight reel.

Some motorcycling weekends, however, are bigger than others. When I was asked the Monday following Thanksgiving about my weekend, the inquisitor surely was sorry he asked. The ride was simply too much to share in a short time.

For the last two years I have participated in the LA Barstow to Vegas dual-sport ride. Also, for the last two years, I have ridden my motorcycle to the event and back from Las Vegas to my home in the San Fernando Valley near Los Angeles, Calif.

After Thanksgiving dinner at my mother-in-law's house, it is off to Palmdale, Calif., and the start of my ride. I am slightly apprehensive this year because I'm on a new bike. My 2011 Husqvarna TE 630 is just past its break-in period. Although I'm well packed with tools, tubes and spares, and the only thing I'm missing is the 200 pounds that I saved off my old bike, there are always unknowns about a new machine. Thankfully, this ride is the beginning of something wonderful between my new red-and-white friend and me.

Into The Desert

Meeting up at the Holiday Inn in Palmdale, Calif., with a few familiar faces on Thanksgiving night is a great way to kick off the 28th annual LA Barstow to Vegas dual-sport ride. I can't help but notice how different it is today compared to my one and only entry in the famous desert race the ride is named for. (That was also on a Husqvarna—a 1978 390 CR.) The next

morning is a particularly inspiring sight. Bikes are everywhere, from everywhere. It really is something.

I hit the trail around 0800. My GPS and an extremely full roll-chart holder are in clear view, and an eager 630 Husky is keeping my hands warm. I'm an early sweep rider. My job is to stay approximately mid-pack and offer assistance to those who may encounter problems.

After a few pavement miles, the route turns toward the foothills. Recent rains make for prime dirt-riding conditions. I give an emphatic tip of the hat to those involved laying out the first several miles of dirt on this epic ride. The terrain is challenging enough to get a feel for what is in store the rest of the weekend. I'm asked more than once where the "easy" route is.

"You're on it, buddy," I say.

Once out of the foothills, and after a brief fuel stop, we enter the Antelope Valley, and then make our way into the desert. This is where I feel like I'm in my element. Riding

a motorcycle through the desert is an experience that is unmatched and hard to explain. Yes, it may be my backyard, but I never grow tired of the desert.

There are so many variables in an organized event of this size, but weather has got to be one of the biggest concerns. It is so important to be prepared for anything. As a sweep rider, I can say that most riders were well prepared for what was ahead. I was impressed by the lack of broken bikes along the route. Bike prep was taken seriously by most of the riders this year.

And for good reason. If you look at a map, the distance between Los Angeles and Barstow doesn't look that far, but considering our route, it is quite a ride. I roll into Barstow well after dark.

Day 2

Saturday morning around the sign-up area is even more impressive than Day 1. I'm also excited to see an old desert racing partner and his son. We plan to ride together as much as possible barring any incidents requiring my attention. We managed to stay together a good portion of the day—just like old times.

It's a mix of old and new for me. I hadn't ridden through the Calico Mountains since the late 1970s. A ride through Alton Canyon is a first, and much-anticipated, event that didn't disappoint. If riding through deep sand for what may feel like 100 miles doesn't appeal to you, then you may want to make other plans.

The Husky never backs down.

"Sand, rocks, roots, ruts, hills. What else you got?" I imagine I hear this quite a few times over the weekend. I definitely made a good choice concerning the bike (although I might want to get those voices looked at...).

Riders choosing the more difficult route through Red Rock Canyon on Saturday are treated to some spectacular scenery. It is, however, a challenging ride in a few places. Similar to the previous year, I run slightly behind schedule and manage to view the sunset in this incredible place.

It's moments like these

when I'm reminded how great this sport is. Here I am on Highway 159. It's dark, pretty chilly, and I have traveled close to 500 miles in two days on what most people would consider an outright dirtbike. Despite the hot shower waiting for me at the end of this day's ride, something in me already wants to turn around and ride it all again. Alas, I have more miles of sweep rider duties ahead of me, however, so I ride into Las Vegas and take Flamingo Road to the Orleans Hotel.

Dual-Sport Dreams

Over the years, I've learned that much of the success of a dual-sport event depends on accurate roll charts and GPS maps. This event had both. The months and months of hard work came down to just two days for the LA Barstow to Vegas crew. Absolutely, mission accomplished (again) this year.

Thankfully, a lot of folks enjoyed all that hard work. For 2011, there were a record number of participants. It was great to see so much enthusiasm on two wheels. There was also a large contingent of adventure

bikes this year. That's fine, though. As with most rides, a lot of care was taken to find routes that would be enjoyable for both smaller and larger machines. At the end of the ride, most of the adventure crowd reported they were challenged, but not uncomfortably so. Perfect.

The terrain on this ride varies greatly. There are routes designated easy and hard, and each rider can make the choice that suits him or her. That is a huge plus when accommodating more than 500 riders. For me, I added another layer to this incredible weekend by riding the Husky back to L.A. No truck or trailer for me. There is nothing like wearing out a set of tires in four days!

I guess that brings up a question. What do I call myself? A dual-sport rider? An adventure rider? Whatever the answer, I'm the guy grinning under my helmet like Malcolm Smith in "On Any Sunday."

So, how was your weekend?

John Gil is an AMA member from Reseda, Calif.

NATIONAL DUAL-SPORT, ADVENTURE SERIES

All The Thrills, None Of The Hassle

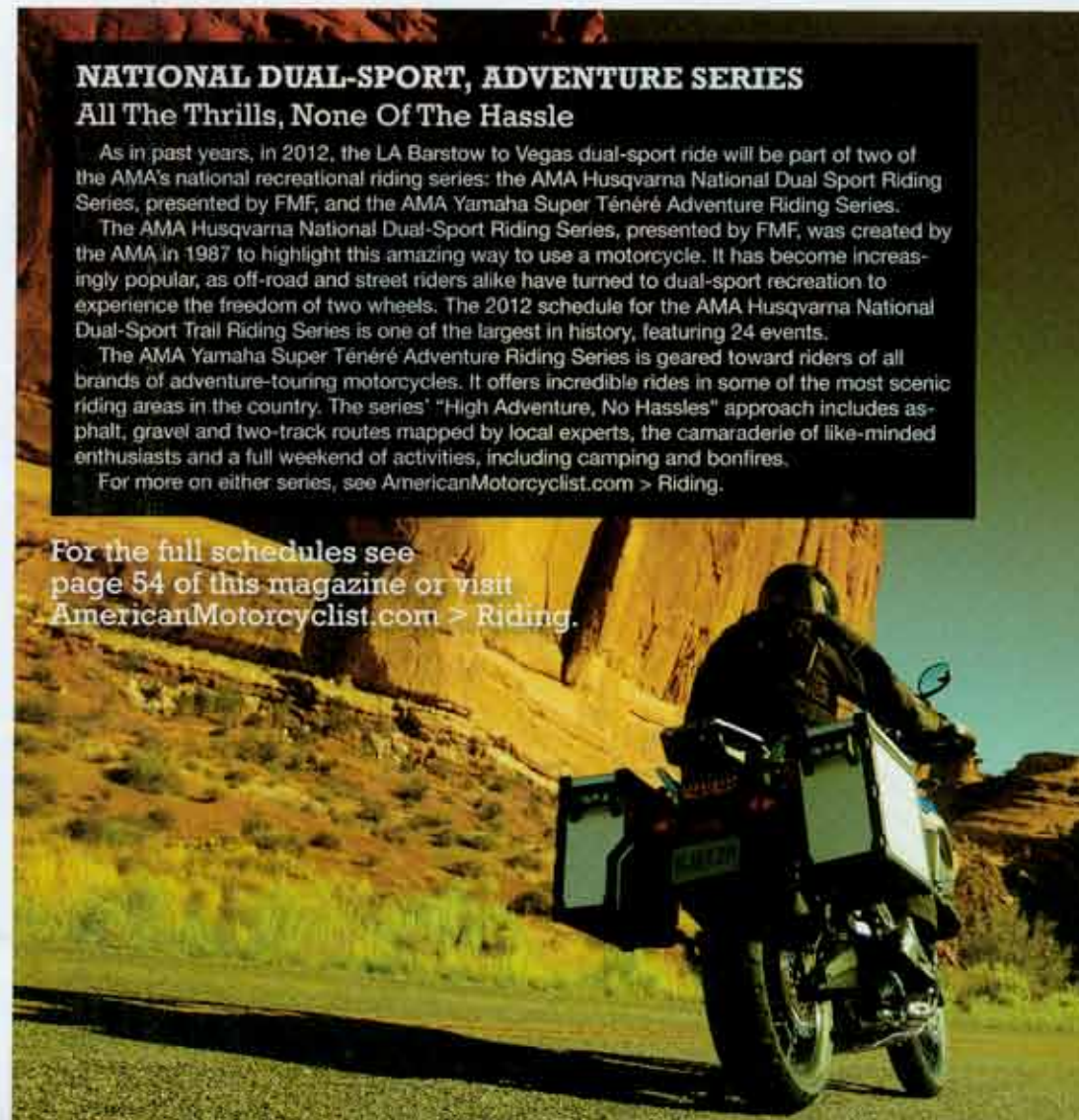
As in past years, in 2012, the LA Barstow to Vegas dual-sport ride will be part of two of the AMA's national recreational riding series: the AMA Husqvarna National Dual Sport Riding Series, presented by FMF, and the AMA Yamaha Super Ténéré Adventure Riding Series.

The AMA Husqvarna National Dual-Sport Riding Series, presented by FMF, was created by the AMA in 1987 to highlight this amazing way to use a motorcycle. It has become increasingly popular, as off-road and street riders alike have turned to dual-sport recreation to experience the freedom of two wheels. The 2012 schedule for the AMA Husqvarna National Dual-Sport Trail Riding Series is one of the largest in history, featuring 24 events.

The AMA Yamaha Super Ténéré Adventure Riding Series is geared toward riders of all brands of adventure-touring motorcycles. It offers incredible rides in some of the most scenic riding areas in the country. The series' "High Adventure, No Hassles" approach includes asphalt, gravel and two-track routes mapped by local experts, the camaraderie of like-minded enthusiasts and a full weekend of activities, including camping and bonfires.

For more on either series, see AmericanMotorcyclist.com > Riding.

For the full schedules see page 54 of this magazine or visit AmericanMotorcyclist.com > Riding.



AMA NATIONAL



RIDE MORE

DUAL-SPORT SERIES

PRESENTED BY FMF

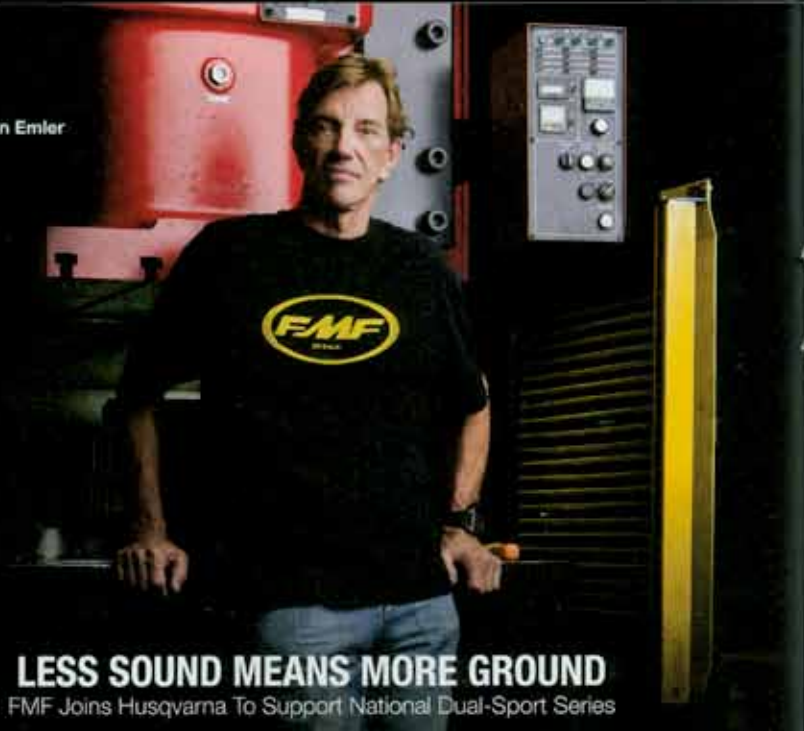
Husqvarna is proud to sponsor the 2012 AMA National Dual-Sport Series



www.husqvarna-motorcyclesna.com



FMF's Don Emler



LESS SOUND MEANS MORE GROUND

FMF Joins Husqvarna To Support National Dual-Sport Series

Need a new silencer? Have we got a series for you. With FMF signed on as the presenting sponsor for the 2012 AMA Husqvarna National Dual-Sport Series, presented by FMF, riders in the series will have a shot at winning a new exhaust.

"With its Q Stealth and Q4 quiet off-road exhausts, FMF has long been a responsible corporate citizen of the motorcycling community," says AMA Director of Operations Jack Penton. "We're excited that FMF is on board with the country's leading series of organized off-road motorcycle recreational rides."

FMF has provided industry-leading exhausts for more than 39 years. With products for two- and four-stroke platforms, full-sized bikes, minibikes, all-terrain vehicles and more, the company has a full lineup of both performance-enhancing and quiet pipes.

"A driving force at our company is the love of riding," says FMF founder Don Emler. "We ride every chance we get, and that fuels our passion to build the best products possible. Our goal is to help our customers get the most out of their riding experience, and to that end we're pleased to support the AMA and the 2012 AMA Husqvarna National Dual-Sport Series, presented by FMF. Dual-sport riding is some of the most fun you can have on two wheels. We're happy to be a part of this series, and I'm personally looking forward to throwing my leg over my motorcycle and experiencing these great rides myself."

For more about the AMA Husqvarna National Dual-Sport Series, presented by FMF, see AmericanMotorcyclist.com > Riding > Husqvarna Dual Sport or Facebook.com/AMADualSport.

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE REMINDER *Check Your Card*

One of the most popular benefits of AMA membership is AMA Roadside Assistance. AMA Roadside Assistance covers you and your family members in case of a mechanical breakdown on the road, whether you are riding your motorcycle, driving your car or towing your trailer.

Three-year and auto-renewing members receive this valuable benefit at no additional cost.

However, to take advantage of this benefit, you must call the number on your

current AMA membership card. If you use an expired card, you may be calling the wrong number and your service could be delayed.

Pretty simple, right?

If you have any questions about whether you have your most current card, just give us a call at (800) 262-5646 or email us at membership@ama-cycle.org, and we'll help you out.

