



The Poland EXPRESS

MCA catches up with Kamil Gamanski and Izabela Frycz as they roam in the land of the Tsars, after departing from Japan. The latest updates on their epic motorcycle journey from Singapore to Poland. Their latest update to Motor Culture Asia...

Kamil: So far we have covered 17,000 km through seven exciting Asian countries. With a budget of around US\$30-40 per day (including petrol, accommodation and food), we have had to become creative, spending most nights camped in secluded forests and other hidden places.

Living on the road has become our daily life. It has its difficult moments but we would not swap it for anything. The places and people that we have encountered so far make this an incredible experience which we will cherish long after the trip is finished...

We had set off from Singapore on 20 April 2008. Making quick progress on Malaysia's quality highways we reached Hat Yai (Thailand) in two days. With a comfy new seat we headed north past Bangkok, for a week of touring around Chiang Mai and Thailand's mountainous north. Taking the ferry across the Mekong (deep in the Golden Triangle) we entered Laos and another world... Ancient hill tribes occupy the mountains, tiny villages dot the country side and animals freely roam the streets. Cambodia although similar in its slow development and laid back attitude, lacked the warmth and hospitality of Laos. It was also an expensive place to travel with petrol at US\$1.30.

One thing both countries did have in common were the 'interesting' roads, with surfaces varying between asphalt, gravel and slippery mud, with a few river crossings thrown in. They definitely made for interesting side trips...

Due to driving and riding restrictions on





foreigners in China, Vietnam and Myanmar, for the next part of our journey we were forced to ship our bike from Bangkok (Thailand) to Fukuoka (Japan). As we decided to air freight our bike, the crate in which it was sent needed to be as small as possible. We therefore took off both wheels, the front forks, pannier frames and even the handle bars. We must have done a good job as the agent commented that he had not seen a crate so small before!

Japan was a total contrast to South East Asia. Although just as heavily congested with traffic, the mild mannered Japanese drivers and infinite number of traffic lights ensure a leisurely pace on the roads. Also all streets are paved, even the smallest of routes in remote mountain ranges. One of the highlights in Japan was the island of Hokkaido. Long open roads and spectacular coastal scenery make it a motorcyclist's dream. We also had a close encounter with a brown bear that had strayed out of the woods and into the streets of the small fishing village we had just entered.

Our next destination, although still part of Asia, resembled Eastern Europe some 40 years ago.

The island of Sakhalin was our transit point and gateway to far eastern Russia. While waiting for our new tyres to arrive from Singapore, we explored this remote part of the world and got a chance to test the Africa Twin on some amazing beach trails.

Any trip to Russia would not be complete without a vodka drinking session with the locals. We had a chance to experience this while on the 18 hour ferry to the port town of Vanino on mainland Russia. The truck drivers on board make very good hosts...

The most demanding part of our ride so far, has been the 2,000km+ 'Amur' section of Russia's Federal Highway between Khabarovsk and Chita, which winds its way through south eastern Siberia and resembles a never-ending construction site. After 5 days of 12 hour riding on sandy and gravel roads we arrived in Mongolia totally exhausted.



Brake downs and repairs on the Africa Twin have been minimal. The only major exceptions being a worn out rear wheel bearing, a faulty starter relay and a few flat tyres on the gravel sections in Russia... We plan to take a few days rest in Ulan Bator (Mongolia's capital) before crossing to the western border with Russia via the Gobi desert in the south. Follow our continuing adventure at www.singapore2poland.com