

NO DUST, NO GLORY

WITH THEIR TRAVEL PLANS IN TATTERS, **LENNART ANDREAS** AND HIS WIFE **MAIA** REFUSE TO GIVE UP ON THEIR JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME, AS THEY TRAVEL THROUGH KENYA AND TANZANIA



◀ With little experience of riding off road, Lennart and Maia had to learn how to tackle sand quickly



Reaching Cape Town in South Africa by motorcycle is a dream for many people. My wife Maia and I shared that dream. Travelling on two wheels is a passion that we both embrace but crossing Africa would be taking it to a whole new level. Yet, the idea of riding through a continent known for its stunning scenery and wildlife started to grow on us. But Africa... were we really up to it? Could we really do it?

With close to zero off-road skills and even less technical knowhow, how often would we have to go beyond our limits? What about all those border crossings? What about the paperwork? There were so many ifs, and so many buts. But what the hell, no dust, no glory! In a split-second decision, we decided there was only one way to make our dreams come true: to just go and do it. Africa, here we come!

Or so we thought, because the only thing that came next was a global pandemic. The original plan to enter Africa via Israel and Jordan had to be aborted with only one week to go because of border closures and general worldwide upheaval. Despite this, we refused to cancel our plans. We had allocated the next six months of our lives to travelling, and we were determined to make the most of those six months. Friends and family clearly doubted our sanity, but they quickly realised they couldn't talk us out of our trip of a lifetime.

So, we set off on our adventure from our home in Switzerland not knowing if we would even be able to reach Africa, let alone make it all the way to Cape Town. We didn't know how the border situation would develop, and we didn't know how restricted travel would be. But, as with our decision to go on this trip to begin with, there was only one way to find out: just go and do it.

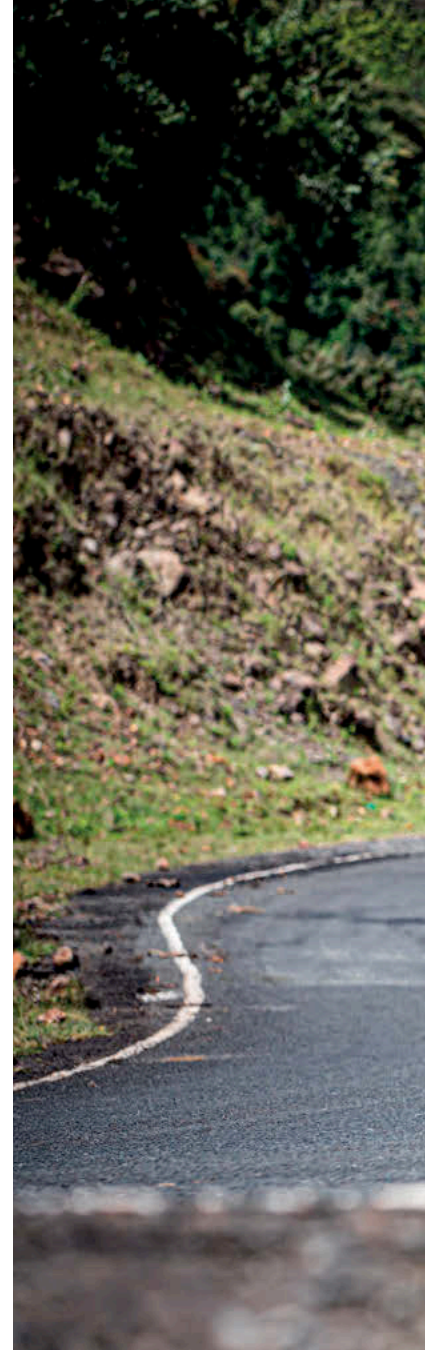


A DETOUR THROUGH EUROPE

The only option open to us was to look at the border situation to figure out where we could travel. To begin with, we were restricted to Europe so, via the Baltics, Finland, and Norway, we reached Iceland after five weeks of riding. Although we should have been deep in Africa by then, this proved to be some of the best riding of our lives.

While we were in Iceland, Kenya announced that it was opening its borders for international travel again, and Tanzania had never closed. Maia and I needed exactly 30 seconds to decide what we were going to do: we would fly the bikes to Kenya. Although several other African countries, such as Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa were still keeping their borders closed, we could live with the idea that, in the worst case, we would be 'stuck' in Kenya and Tanzania for four months. So, once again, it was a case of Africa here we come, this time for real.

From Iceland, we rushed to London. Upon arriving at the UK border control, we told the officer that we were heading to Heathrow Airport to fly to Kenya. We didn't know what sort of reception we would get but the officers were very friendly. We touched down at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. The flight itself was a breeze, but the chaos started as soon as we walked off the plane. International flights had



- ◀ Never forget you're not top of the food chain in Africa
- ▲ Maia enjoys the twisties in Kenya
- ▶ The track Lennart and Maia were following disappeared and they were lost



only just resumed, and Kenya was not quite ready yet to handle incoming passengers, resulting in long queues and loud, agitated people.

The situation became tense as people started to skip the line. We simply waited and absorbed what was going on. We knew Africa had plenty in store to test our patience, so we remained calm and let the situation unfold in front of us. An hour later, we walked out of the airport and into Nairobi.

INTO AFRICA

Iceland to Nairobi was a culture shock. The place was alive, vibrant, loud, colourful, and joyful. And busy, very busy. It was full of people, full of cars, full of minivans with their drivers competing for passengers. Although we enjoyed every second, we've never really been city people and it was quite overwhelming. And let's be honest, we didn't go to Africa for its city life.

A few days later, we got the exciting news that our motorcycles, two Triumph Tiger 900 Rally Pros, had arrived by cargo plane. Step one was done, but the second step, getting the bikes cleared and out of the airport, could have been the toughest challenge. However, despite being a time-consuming process, the local contact from Moto Freight guided us through it all, and after a few hours, we got our bikes out of the warehouse. Ripping open the crates was great fun.

We geared up, signed a few more papers, and fired up the engines. It was hard to believe we were actually riding our bikes in Africa! In a couple of days we would point them in a southern direction and head for Cape Town. Needless to say, riding out of the airport, we were overwhelmed with emotions, only to be stuck in traffic right after. We were still in Nairobi after all.

Two days later we were packed and ready to explore Kenya. It only took a few miles for us to fall in love with the country and Africa in general. The landscape started to open up, there were locals selling fresh fruits everywhere we looked, and we eagerly scanned the roadside for wildlife.

AN AK-47 ENCOUNTER

At one point, we stopped at a tiny roadside shop to get some refreshments. Within seconds, and seemingly out of nowhere, a crowd of people gathered to gaze at us and our Tigers. It was something we would need to get used to. We were almost never alone in Kenya. No matter where we went, no matter how remote we thought we were, there were somehow always at least a few locals around. Although being surrounded by 25 or more people felt intimidating at first, it always happened in a very respectful way.

As we rode along a small, sandy road near the border with Tanzania, we saw that a spiked strip had been laid across the road. Three men dressed in army clothes and carrying AK-47s approached. Before we left home, we'd heard plenty of stories about how dangerous Africa could be. The robberies, the violence, the bad intentions. And here we

were, two days after leaving Nairobi, in an armed encounter with no way out.

However, we saw a few locals milling around and in a split second we both confirmed over the intercom system that our gut feeling was that the situation wasn't threatening, so we decided to head right into it. To this very day, we don't know what drove us to do so, and I'm not sure if we'd take the same decision again.

Thankfully, it turned out to be the right call. After asking where we were from, and where we were heading too, all the gun-toting men wanted to do was take selfies. They did ask us what we had brought for them from Switzerland, and we politely answered that all the Swiss chocolate had melted by now. Friendliness, a smile, and some patience luckily still go a long way in this world.

A STEEP LEARNING CURVE

If you want to, you can ride to Cape Town almost entirely on paved roads. We, of course, chose not to do so. After riding in Iceland, we had built up a little experience of riding off road, but the real challenges came sooner than expected. Right after our AK-47 encounter, the road became covered in a layer of very fine red sand, and it really slowed down our travels.

The way to tackle riding in sand is basically to go faster, but it takes a lot of practice to have the confidence to do that, especially on fully-loaded bikes. We didn't have the confidence to do that yet, so we had a steep learning curve and went with a slow and steady approach, although the Tigers could have easily blasted through it with more skilful riders at the controls.

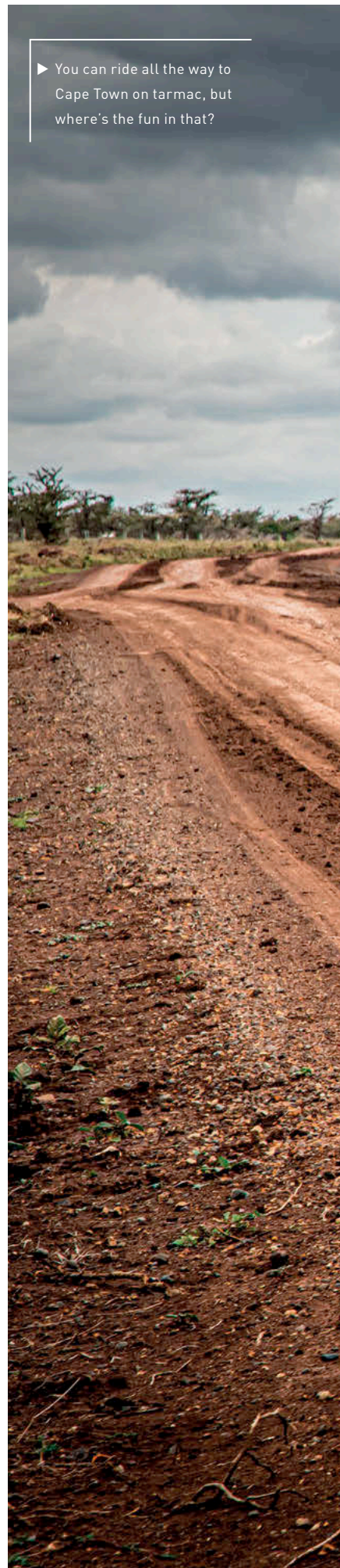
We regularly passed little huts that were home to farmers and tribespeople, and we were a little surprised to find we had a perfect 4G signal much of the time. Kenya wasn't turning out to be the remote animal kingdom we'd seen depicted on so many Netflix documentaries, but we didn't care because we were having so much fun exploring and meeting people.

PICTURE-PERFECT AFRICA

However, once we reached the Mara Triangle, on the south-western border with Tanzania, we knew we had found picture-perfect Africa. The Africa where the plains are wide, nature is raw, and wild animals are in abundance. Zebras crossed the road, wildebeest thundered by in

**OUR BODIES SOMEHOW TAPPED
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SURVIVAL MODE**

► You can ride all the way to Cape Town on tarmac, but where's the fun in that?







huge numbers, and giraffes towered above the grassy fields. The sight of the sun setting on this magical land was unforgettable.

There was something so special about riding in such a pristine environment. It was here we realised how beautiful the world that we live in truly is. We forgot about everyday life, and about everyday problems. All that mattered was to be there in the moment, soaking up our surroundings. Memories were made for life.

THE LIONS WILL CHASE YOU

Our first African border crossing approached and it all went surprisingly smoothly. Tanzania required a negative COVID test to get in, and although we had one, the health officer at the border told us not to worry because the virus didn't exist there. We decided it'd be wise to still be careful.

Other than that, once we were stamped out of Kenya and into Tanzania, we were good to go. We soon found ourselves close to the Serengeti National Park, a world-famous wildlife refuge where you can spot rhinos, elephants, lions, cheetahs, leopards, and host of other animals in a magnificent location. It's an absolute must visit, unless you are on a motorcycle.

Most national parks decline entry to bikes due to the presence of wild animals, many of them predators, that like to chase things. If that thing turns out to be you, you will stand very little chance if you're not safely sitting inside a car. Despite this, we did go to the gates of the national park to take photos of our motorcycles next to the entry sign, a little sad not to be going inside.

However, after hearing from a tourist about how he had just seen some wildebeest being torn up by lions, we suddenly fully agreed with the no motorcycles rule.

WHERE WATER GOES TO DIE

We skirted our way around the Serengeti National Park, slowly making our way towards the city of Arusha in the North of Tanzania. We took a short cut along the south shore of Lake Eyasi, going off the beaten path literally as there were no paths there. Lake Eyasi is a place where "water comes to die", as a local described it to us, because there is no outflow. All the water that goes into the lake simply evaporates.

Neither Google Maps nor our Garmin SatNav displayed any roads to follow, but after studying some satellite images, it seemed like there were tracks to follow. No risk, no fun, right? We decided to go for it. We started on a trail with a washboard surface, but it soon became smaller and smaller until there was only a vague track visible in the vegetation.

Each time we crossed one of a series of dry riverbeds, the track completely disappeared, and after about five of these sandy crossings, we had no clue where to go anymore. The tracks we had seen on the satellite images turned out to be nothing more than small, sandy paths that shifted with the wind and rain. The heat was sapping our energy and there was no shade to shelter from the sun, although the bikes seemed to excel in this harsh off-road environment. But we could barely carry on as the elements took their toll on us.

▲ Maia finds shade hard to come by in Tanzania



WHO'S WRITING

Lennart Andreas and his wife Maia recently completed a six-month journey through Europe and Africa. Having started at home in Switzerland, they travelled as far north as Nordkapp in Norway, before finishing in Cape Town at the end of 2020.

Freelance photographer Lennart has also ridden from LA to New York, and over the highest passes in India. He feels lucky to be able to share his passion for motorcycling with his wife Maia, and together they have ridden tens of thousands of miles on two wheels around the world.

Discover more about Lennart and Maia's travels on Instagram @lennart.andreas and @maias_travels, and at www.finding-neverland.com

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HI-ART  SKIN FIT   LEVEL 1



Touch screen technology

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We had no choice but to push on as darkness was rapidly approaching, and there were thunderstorms on the horizon. The situation was tough, but our bodies somehow tapped into unknown energy reserves and our minds switched to some kind of survival mode. We motivated each other through our intercoms, and long after darkness had fallen, we arrived at a campsite near Karatu. We'd experienced the adventure we were looking for, but it might not have been our smartest move.

Karatu is situated close to the Ngorongoro Crater, a vast geological feature caused by a collapsing volcano millions of years ago. It's now home to a wide variety of wildlife that roam the area, including lions, rhinos, zebras, and elephants. Normally, this is a major tourist hotspot where up to 400 vehicles a day descend into the crater. However, even though Tanzania was open for tourism, there weren't any people around. In other words, we enjoyed every second of having this wonderful place entirely to ourselves. Wildlife was all around us. Again, Mother Nature showed us how amazing our planet is.

WE HAVE ARRIVED

We enjoyed our time in Kenya, but it was while travelling through Tanzania that we finally felt like we had arrived in Africa. Physically we had been there since we'd touched down in Nairobi, but it took us a while to get our heads around the fact we were travelling through this huge continent. It took us a month or so to embrace the very different pace of life, the hectic towns and cities, the isolation of the plains, and the fact we were riding into the unknown every day. We were very much aware we were living the adventure of a lifetime.

A check of the news one morning revealed Malawi had just opened up its borders, and Zambia and Namibia were looking good too. And, while Botswana and South Africa were still no-go zones for outsiders, that was a problem for another day. For the time being we welcomed every day that we could explore Africa, and we knew there was a lot more to come on our adventure to Cape Town.

THE BIKES

Our trip formed part of a six-month motorcycle journey, so we needed bikes that were both capable and comfortable. The Triumph Tiger 900 Rally Pro offers both. In fact, they performed far above expectations. We travelled through weather conditions ranging from below zero with snowstorms, to 43C and sandstorms, but nothing could stop these machines.

Two flat tyres were the worst that happened. Besides a few accessories, the Tigers were not modified and dealt with road surfaces ranging from good to very bad, and even non-existent. The bikes simply kept on going, getting us safely up, over and through all that we encountered. We are only average riders, but the Tiger 900 is so capable, it enabled us to follow our dreams.

▼ The Triumph Tiger 900 excelled in the tough conditions

