

## ENDUROMANIA 2002

Graham, Stewart and myself had looked forward to EnduRoMania for over 6 months, so within a few hours of arrival our bikes were out of trailer and ready to go. We were joined by our new Scottish friend Dougie.

With a lot of off road experience between us I suspected the riding would be fast and furious along with high spirits! Within five minutes of riding my suspicions were proved correct with the pace set by the leader flat out and on effort for the following three just to keep up! The lead would change often as mistakes were made, and it has to be said the odd crash was common!

We decided early we would not accumulate points when we visited checkpoints, but instead take photographs, sometimes without stopping! The most memorable photos were the ones to celebrate the renaming of Cozia Top in Scotia Top and raising the Scottish flag on the cross at the top.

We seldom met any other Enduromania riders, but on one day we did, we were standing around a checkpoint when we heard bikes coming toward us, quickly we covered over the checkpoint ( [ ] ) mark and waved to the riders as they passed by. We hope they found it eventually and forgive our sense of humor!

On most days out riding we keep an eye out for extreme trails either up or down. On one outing we came across a long and very steep hill, sandy, stones, rocks and did I say it was very steep, as we stood to get ready to give it 110% effort an old lady came by and stood in the middle of the road waving her arms up and down as we all tried and failed to get to the top! I understood enough Romanian to understand she was telling us we were going to wrong way and this particular old trail had been washed away by previous floods and was too steep to go up!

As Stewart and Graham kept trying to go up and sometimes crashing in the process, the old lady was praying to God and crossing herself from head to shoulders so we would not hurt our self's! Eventually we all got to the top and visited this hill many times!

One night after riding we sat down to the Enduromania evening meal and then drinks to follow, the drinks turned into more drinks as we chatted with other riders. With our usual morning rise at 7.30 a.m. we headed off to bed at 2 a.m. with the exception of Stewart who was in "Party Mood", my last words to him were to remember him of 7.30 rise! The next morning at 7.30 Stewart was dead to the world and did not look like he would ever get up when suddenly at around 8.00 a.m. he jumped out of bed with full riding gear including boots already on! He had changed into his riding gear before we went to bed at around 4.30 a.m. to save time in the morning and prove to us he will always be ready to ride!!

On days out riding we travel at a speed, which eventually create a crash and we have learned to crash in style! It's also the case that each of us will have our day of a few crashes; on one particular day it was Dougie's turn! As we three came flying round a corner chasing Dougie, we suddenly came across deep ruts which we managed to avoid, but the scene in front of us was a bike obviously cross rutted and a pair of boots following Dougie over a large bush of around 2 m tall, Graham fell off his bike laughing!

Later on the same day we came across a shallow and very stony river with a few small waterfalls, so we rode up and down around 300 m starting slowly and upping a gear racing each other until we were in 4<sup>th</sup> at speed. We all realized we were on the limit and any faster was risky! With the exception of Dougie who wanted to show us it could be ridden in 5<sup>th</sup> gear!

We sat down for the performance as he sped toward us, water spraying everywhere until 20 m from us he lost the front end on a large stone and bounced against a very large boulder which catapulted him through to the air in front of us. We should have looked concerned but instead couldn't stop laughing at the scene of parts of his bike floating down the river in front of us!

He turned out to be O.K. and at a measured distance we worked out he had flown through the air a full 15 m! The judges scores were all 9.7 for a perfect landing & style!! This was for Dougie unfortunately not the end of the day! We carried on to the top of a large mountaintop where we stopped to take in the view and the pleasure of Enduromania, and as usual Dougie fell asleep, at this point a very large shepherds dog arrived as we backed away behind our bikes leaving Dougie still sleeping! The dog then turned its attentions to Dougie and started to lick his face! Can you imagine the fits of laughter we were having as Dougie slept through this entire ordeal.

Enduromania for us is the highlight of the year, a holiday in Paradise. We have fond memories of the last two years and look forward to 2003.

Sergio, Simina and the team lay on a fantastic week and are there to assist at all times.

One of our fondest memories is a day we ventured downward into a steep large canyon! As we rode downward it became so steep we could not return upwards! We ended up at the bottom in what we now call "Hell Canyon"! The situation was that we could not ride up, down, forward or backward so we set off passing four bikes down water falls, banking, and at one point balancing wheels across a fallen tree 15 m. It took us 2 hours to travel 300 m to end up in a large river. We then set off down and across the river a further 300 m until we found a hill upward again a very steep and hoped we could ride to the top! We all tried dozens of attempts at different angles and speeds only to travel 200 m. By this time we were all completely exhausted to the point of not being able to go on when suddenly Dougie standing in front of us collapsed and fell to the ground! We all quickly went to him to help. He was still unconscious when he suddenly opened his eye to our relief! We asked what had happened to him and he told us he had fainted with exhaustion! Stewart replied: "Thank God for that, we thought you had been hit by a snipers bullet!" The laughter was so great we found a bit of energy and managed to ride traversing to the top and homeward.

Just another Scottish day out in Enduromania!

Steven Palmer Jan. 2003