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The ride, which has hopefully piqued your interest, is the Colorado Adventure Motorcycle 1000, a.k.a. the CAM1k, the seed of which was planted five years ago after the purchase of a V-Strom, whereupon I immediately fell in love with adventure riding. Initially, I was introduced to like-minded adventurers through the ADVRider forum and their western event, WestFest, which I attended in 2008 and 2009. Then came the Big Dog Ride, hosted by none other than Dr. Greg Frazier. I was hooked.

The inaugural CAM1k long distance ride was coordinated by the newly established Rocky Mountain Adventure Riders (RMAR), a Colorado Springs AMA non-profit group, focusing on adventure riding and fundraising for trail advocacy. The Colorado mountains and surrounding mesas serve as the RMAR riding area. Its' grandeur cannot be overstated—the ideal backdrop for epic adventure rides.

But, what exactly is adventure riding? The term is rampant with subjective definitions, including everything from groomed fire trail riding to circumnavigating the world with no external support. A friend helped with his assessment, “The definition includes ‘risk.’ Without some level of risk, it is not an adventure.” I'd also add that adventure includes exciting and unusual experiences with potentially uncertain outcomes. There are physical and psychological risks involved.

The concept of the CAM1k and its seven days of riding and camping, is not so much to define “adventure riding” as it is to leave riders with a feeling of accomplishment as well as fond memories. Someone once said, “Experience is not what happens to a man. It is what a man does with what happens to him.” And, what better place to make this happen than the Colorado mountains?

Ultimately, 12 riders made the early September line-up that began in Colorado Springs. The group assembled at Apex Sports for a pre-ride meeting and dinner, returning on Sunday morning for the departure.
Riders descend Stony Pass (altitude 12,588 ft), just east of Silverton, CO.
**DAY 1**

**The Test**

Despite warnings that it would be an incredibly tough ride, a shakedown was necessary to determine the participants’ skills. Therefore, the ride commenced on well-maintained dirt roads for the first several hours to Cotopaxi, where things got harder as we proceeded south to tackle Haden Pass.

The loose rocks along this pass presented the first technical challenges, resulting in a busted brake line and frequently dropped bikes—an experience that weeded out the riders who were over their heads. This also set the stage for the riders to begin acting as a team. The steep inclines and declines, resulting in numerous “get-offs,” demanded the assistance of fellow riders to right the fallen adventure-laden bikes. By the end of the day, this made for a tighter group and some fun fireside banter.

**DAYS 2 & 3**

**Experiencing the Magnificent Glory of the San Juan Mountains**

The mountains continued to challenge us. We ride dual-sport and adventure bikes here because it moves our souls. It’s a very rare sensation to be above 13,000 feet without feeling some sense of awe amongst the towering peaks—an almost spiritual experience. This seemed to elevate the group, leaving us open to meet the challenges of the varied terrain, improving our riding abilities, and ultimately the discovery of our bikes’ true capabilities. The air was crisp, clean and invigorating, helping to build confidence and physical tolerance to the weather extremes we encountered, including sleet and snow.

**DAYS 4 & 5**

**The Adventure Continues...**

During an overnight stop at a Silverton campground we met with various city officials, including the mayor, for an informal restaurant dinner. The objective was to discuss their willingness to host future adventure riding events, as well as to dispel any preconceived notions they may have had regarding adventure riders. Our input may have swayed some of the city officials’ attitudes.

We’re generally a hungry and thirsty bunch, and the resulting economic benefits to the area cannot be denied. However, education and setting a positive example are no longer optional if we’re to keep enjoying access to public land. We know that conservation and preservation of the wilderness is in our best interests. Being good ambassadors requires a proactive approach.

*RMAR partner, Apex Sports of Colorado Springs, was the starting point.*
Mechanical Gremlins and Can It Get any Colder?

By now, setting up camp had become a well rehearsed event, all of us working together like a well oiled machine. We were now able to set up camp quickly despite arriving at our night’s destination in fading sunlight. Almost without words, riders split into groups gathering firewood, finding a stream to purify water, and preparing stoves. It had become somewhat of a group “grab bag,” where food was readily shared, and water was boiled in single pots for multiple meals.

Evidently, the campground had another camper, a hunter preparing for the following day. He stopped by to let it be known that although he no longer rode motorcycles, he missed the days when he was active in the sport. Much to the credit of this ex-KLR rider, and in the true spirit of adventure riders everywhere, he shared his micro-brew stash with all of us. It really doesn’t get any better than that.

That night the temperature dipped dramatically. Waking up to 17°F, with frost-covered motorcycles, definitely exceeded the definition of “invigorating,” and became just freakin’ cold! We all moved a little more quickly that morning, breaking down camp and prepping the bikes, a couple of which had starting issues. Even the obligatory oatmeal breakfasts were abandoned in favor of getting back on the trails.

Bikes, Luggage, and Gear, Oh My...

Bike manufacturers represented included Suzuki, Honda, Kawasaki, KTM and Husky. The Suzuki DR650, a fairly well respected dual-sport, was the weapon of choice by four of the riders. Although the prevailing philosophy is that lighter is better when riding off road, the skill of the rider obviously plays a vitally important role, too. The heaviest bike on our ride, a KTM950 SE, probably had the best rider, who taught us a thing or two.

A wide assortment of luggage, bags, jugs, and RotopaX were mounted in every conceivable position. But, the luggage of choice was undoubtedly Wolfman. Their waterproof quality, extreme durability, and robust mounting systems were the deciding factor for a significant number of riders. And, if you’ve never dealt with Wolfman, you’re missing out on a company that prides itself in its products and customer service, a rarity in today’s marketplace. It should be noted that on several bikes the durability of these bags was tested repeatedly with significant falls and crashes, all passing with flying colors.

Throughout the ride Garmin GPS units and SPOT locators were invaluable. Riders unfamiliar with the SPOT soon realized that this piece of kit is truly essential when traveling in remote and rugged terrain.
Riders: An Eclectic, Talented, and Resourceful Band of Brothers

Last, but not least, are the riders, with widely varying backgrounds, experiences, and stories to tell. We had gospel singers with chart hits, highly successful entrepreneurs, business owners, off-road racing fabricators, nuclear power technicians, and retired military. Each and every rider was unpretentious, humble, and willing to help their fellow riders.

Rider skill levels encompassed the full range, from successful Baja 1000 finishers, to the resilient rider who thought he would give off-road riding a try on the CAM1k. All involved acknowledged that their riding skills, regardless of where they began, were improved by the challenges that the CAM1k offered. The camaraderie that developed over the course of seven days was amazing—that’s what hardship, excitement and adrenaline coursing through your veins creates!

Even a year after the event, the bonding continues. It’s become a sort of brotherhood. Each and every one of us rode away a different person after being touched so deeply by the pristine landscape and our experiences out there. And, so it is that adventure riding may never be truly defined in commonly accepted terms, but for those who experience it, no definition is required. 

John Lane is the founder of Rocky Mountain Adventure Riders, an AMA group, as well as the president and chairman of the Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition. John’s passion is to spread the love of adventure riding, while educating enthusiasts on the issues of public land access and fundraising to keep public trails and roads open. John and his wife Audra, live in Colorado Springs, CO, where they regularly explore the Colorado backcountry, two-up on their KTM 950 Adventure. 