



Like a lot of riders, Paula Johnson feels compelled to give back to a greater need, but unlike most, she's willing to go extreme – extreme terrain, that is.

When Paula learned about *Riders For Health*, a charity that delivers health care transport in Africa by way of motorcycles, she saw an opportunity to make a real difference.

In November 2006, Paula will join 100 other riders to take part in Enduro Africa, a grueling 14-day motorbike trip that involves riding through some of South Africa's most rugged and isolated terrain atop Honda CTX200 motorcycles. At the end of the 14 days, Paula's motorcycle will

be donated to a health worker in Africa that will virtually have a live-saving effect on 20,000 people – and that's just her bike alone. Truly amazing!

Before Paula's grueling trip begins in Africa, however, she must first tackle some rough terrain at home to get there. We caught up with her to find out how she's preparing both physically and mentally for an adventure that promises to be a personal challenge.

HH -When one thinks of charity rides, a comfortable cruise escorted by police down a local highway comes to mind. Wouldn't it be so much easier to do something less stressful i.e.: why this cause; why Africa?



PJ - It would be easier, but nowhere near as exciting! I am a great admirer of the work done by Riders for Health; the provision of transport is a very clear and easy concept to relate to. Growing up in rural Cornwall, UK, I really appreciated the opportunities that were opened to me because I had my own cheap reliable transport, in the form of an MZ125 when I was 17. When I read about EnduroAfrica I knew it was something I wanted to take part in. An adventure that would challenge me and would help other people in a way that most of us take for granted.



HH - What experience(s) have you encountered so far, that would give you enough confidence to accomplish this challenge?

PJ - I have ridden bikes all my adult life and while not the fastest or most talented of my peers I have always been a smooth consistent rider. In December 04 I crashed and wrote off my beloved Honda CB500. Although I was uninjured the accident completely shook my confidence and even the simplest journeys became a trial. I contacted the Institute

of Advanced Motoring and they put me in touch with Cornwall Advanced Motorcyclists who took me on their 'Skills for Life' course. The course took me six months and by the end I felt confident enough to give anything on two wheels a try!

HH - How difficult has it been to individually raise so much money in your hometown, a place (you mention) people generally have a low to very fixed income?

PJ - Very! Cornwall has some of the lowest incomes in the UK. Many jobs are seasonal tourism positions and we have very little manufacturing. Business sponsorship has been hard to find as most choose to support charities that are locally based. As I write this I have so far raised £1123 on top of my initial £500 contribution. This has been donated mainly in amounts between £5 and £25 from individuals. To help with fundraising I am running auctions of donated, secondhand bike kit at rallies throughout the summer.



HH - Not only are you giving up your time and resources, but you're also giving up a way of life. You've quit smoking and went on a strict diet to ready you for this cause. How the heck are you doing this, and what impact has it made on you (and those around you) so far?

PJ - Well I don't know how strict the diet is! In reality I am still struggling to find a long term eating plan that I can stick to. My weight has bounced between 12 and 18 stone since my teens, but I think that I am starting to get somewhere with the help of a website called www.weightlossresources.co.uk which enables me to work out my own nutritionally balanced eating plans. The biggest change has been joining the gym and trying to fit regular exercise into my schedule. I now try to exercise for 45 minutes before work five days a week. This has produced great results, lowering my heart rate, blood pressure, and overall fitness, which can only help me on the trip.

HH - When the trip is all said and done, will you get to meet/interact with the people that will directly benefit from Riders for Health?



PJ - I hope so! I believe that at the end of the trip we will get to meet with some of the health workers whom have been working with Riders, and who will be taking our little bikes off onto a new and valuable life.

HH - If this goes well (and we cheer you on 100%), do you think you will do it again, or perhaps maybe this could inspire you try something else?

PJ - Who knows what the future will hold. This is the biggest challenge of my life so far. I have never even been on an airplane let alone

traveled halfway around the world to ride a motorbike across the wilderness!

HH - We like to share suggestions in HH's Road Goddess Guide regarding something you never ride without. What will you be riding with during this significant trip?

PJ - I never ride without waterproof boots! It rains a lot in Cornwall and I hate wet feet. For Africa though, my unforgettable accompaniment will be my partner Nick in my heart. We knew that we would struggle to raise the money for us both to go and I wanted it to go so much! This will be our first time apart in five years. It is this more than anything that wakes me up at night in a panic. He is my rock of stability, my grounding force who makes me feel safe. It will be a doubly emotional journey without him.

HH - Finally, it takes much support from family and friends to help you with your journey. Would you like to give mention, or what we here in the states call 'shout out' to those who've assisted you thus far?

PJ - So many people have helped me so far, too many to list here but they are all on my fundraising site www.rideafrica.co.uk.

I would like to give special thanks to the following though:

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