



All the Gear No Idea: A Woman's Solo Motorbike Journey Around the Indian Subcontinent

Michele Harrison

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Just because someone told her India was "really in your face", Michèle Harrison quit her office job at the age of 33, bought herself an Enfield motorbike and set off for nearly a year in 1997 to tour the Indian subcontinent. Until then, she had only ridden scooters around London. With more gear than sense, her 17,000 miles journey took her through the mayhem of Delhi traffic, the mountains of Kashmir, the deserts of Rajasthan, the beaches of Goa, the southern tip of India, the remote tracks of Nepal and the eerie Himalayan barrenness of Ladakh. She wanted an adventure to spice up a boring life and fulfil her wanderlust. She got that, and more.

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J says

Excellent read

It's always fun to hear of another's travels. It is even more fun to hear it from a woman's perspective. I have traveled to India in my twenties and can picture many of the cities and towns described in this book. Sadly, I traveled by bus and train. Having recently purchased my first motorcycle at the age of 49, I would love to return to India and travel by bike on my own. I don't think we are ever too old for adventure.

Russell Miller says

A Distaff view of my favorite sport and pastime in an exotic and fascinating land

In the 1940s Margaret Whiting sang of "Those Faraway places with the strange sounding names," and those who take me there are friends. Thank you Michele, my friend!

I read "Old Man on a Bike" about travel through Latin America (thank you, Simon). As a result, Kindle suggested this book- I'm 77- age is little impediment to those of us who love wind in our hair and bugs in our teeth!

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Delaine says

enjoyed going on the year long trek with Michele

I enjoyed that most of the book is about the riding, navigating and problem solving vs the scenery. It was the perfect proportion. I liked the episodes of reflection. Very fun read.

Parag says

I liked this one, a straightforward narrative of riding across India and Nepal for nearly a year without getting too heavy handed with philosophy and spirituality. Michele wrote it as she saw it. (I breathed a sigh of relief when she skipped vipassana)

This book took me down the memory lane; it covers India in 1998 and boy, things have changed since then. In terms of decent hardware, we now have KTMs for cities, RE Himalayan for off-roading, and Mojo for touring in India. All these are homemade good bikes that do not break down as frequently as Michele's

Classic 500. We also have awesome Indian motovloggers in Mumbiker Nikhil, Oggy F, and Big Bang Biker, and these guys are inspiring a generation of people to get off their asses and hit the road. Quality of roads is improving all the time and we have accurate navigation thanks to Google maps. Bikers have it good now and that makes me appreciate Michele's feats even more.

Coming back to the book, it read like a diary and that is how I wanted it to be. I felt as if I was riding with Michele the whole time and was seeing India and the people as she saw. She captured all those things in detail that make me love my country as well as piss me off about its rough edges.

One thing that she and my other westerners miss out on is the food of India. One does not completely experience India without its food. I sincerely hope that people will start focusing on simple things like food instead of looking for miracles of spirituality here. That said, I had a total blast with the book. Do share this one with your buddies who are bitten by the travel bug.

Paul Krantz says

A brilliant read!

This is the first book I have purchased in Amazon. It's a superb book that I couldn't put down. I did feel sorry for poor Thumper haha.

Vipin Pandey says

Quirky Book

An English woman switching to an Enfield from a Vespa and that too on Indian Roads! My eye brows twitched with a 1000 questions.

The travel experience spanning over an year is a treat to read. I felt one with Michele when reading the book - I felt the bumpy Indian roads, the sun, the cold, the beauty of the Himalayas, the smiles of the kids, the never ending questions of Indians on seeing an English woman on Enfield...and so much more.

But I like this book not just because it is a pleasure to read but also because of the transformation that happens when one travels solo for such a long time.

Fredrik says

Loved it! It reflects a longheld dream, that is yet to be fulfilled for me. Harrison captures the fascination of India and the thrill of riding an Enfield. I fell in love with the country - and the bike - 20 years ago, and find I recognise a lot of what she writes about - and yearn for the bits that are not part of my own experience yet. Perhaps it's time I started planning my own year on an Enfield...

Jeanne says

A lovely travelogue of a year long solo motorcycle trip through India and Nepal nearly 20 years ago. I enjoyed it the most when she interacted with the locals and other tourists. It was very brave for a woman to travel alone, it is still considered unsafe. But the author had a great adventure. It must have been difficult to pare down the year long ride into one book, but she did a great job editing the story.

Bruce R. Arnold says

Very enjoyable story of travel on a motorcycle

I love travel, and motorcycles, and there are many books that combine both. This is easily one of the better ones. Well written, humorous, and frank.

Sean Rima says

What a great read

I have read many adventure and motorcycle trip books but Michele does what others fail to, and that is to make you part of the trip. The descriptions, the places and Big Thumper all make this a truly unique read. Highly recommended

Cathy Monaghan says

This is a fantastic travelogue of a single woman's year-long trip, on a motorcycle, through India and Nepal twenty years ago. Michèle Harrison took “breaking out of your comfort zone” to a whole different level. I was amazed at how she took one day at a time with what seemed like very little planning ahead. A true optimist, she seemed to know that “it will all work out in the end” and she just kept on. Because there were no photos, I followed along with Google Earth and all the photos it offers for each of her stops. If you like adventure and travelogues, I highly recommend this memoir.

David says

More travelogue than motorcycle book -- not that there's anything wrong with that.

I'm a motorcyclist and armchair adventurer. I bought this book on a whim and am pleased I did so. Harrison's writing is more diary than story; she does not dwell much on introspection or use unnecessary words. While I originally had hoped for more depth and a bit more about riding instead of describing places visited I soon became enchanted by her story. I knew little about India but now feel as if I've gotten a fair idea of what it is about. Since the book contains no photos I supplemented it with looking up images on the internet to better understand what the author was seeing. She does meet unique people and have interesting experiences and

yes, the bike does break down, but I was surprised a Royal Enfield didn't break more often! The author was young, daring and frequently foolish but it makes for an entertaining read. I am glad Harrison chose to share her story with us.

Graham Humpage says

An attention-grabbing read with some insights in to the attitudes of the general populous of India. Having read quite a few motorcycling stories and experienced the situations myself it was like being on the journey with Michelle. Things happen on motorcycles that just don't present themselves with any other form of transport; the freedom and excitement is never far away? A diary of events worth reading - I spent many a happy moment on my recent travels reading this story. The Big Thumper reminds me so much of my old bikes back in the late sixties. It was never a situation of 'if' but 'when' you were going to break down!

Peter says

Great adventure

The title says it all. Unprepared and no ideas about bike maintenance. But this probably made it an even bigger adventure. The book is an entertaining and easy travel report. Not as deep as I.e. Ubuntu which I read before.

Alan says

I started reading this whilst I was in India on a more traditional holiday with my Wife. But every time I saw a Royal Enfield I started to droll. I can understand why so many Indians thought Michele was a man, she must have a massive pair of b*lls to tackle such a journey. I live in SE Asia but have never ever seen driving like India. Not even in Manila, which looks totally tame compared with say Jaipur. Add in Some truly awful roads, potholes that would swallow a truck and then the absolutely massive culture shock, the unbelievable heat in parts of the country and it's not an easy trip for an experienced rider. Michele only passed her bike test a month before!!!!

So I enjoyed the book but what it lacks is detail. The journey is covered but the stops are not really covered in any detail. For instance after reading the part about Udaipur you would not realise that it is one of the most beautiful places in the world. What does shine through is how friendly the Indian people are.
