

River deep, mountain high

The last six weeks of Sebastian Klein's epic voyage from Munich to Bangkok have posed many challenges, including altitude sickness and extreme heat, not to mention military escorts! During a well-deserved rest in Nepal, he describes the latest leg of his journey.



Sebastian departed Munich in May, knowing little about what lay ahead. The route he would take to his final destination of Bangkok was decided and the 25,000-kilometre odyssey was under way. The intention of the trip was to simply push the boundaries in adventure travel, discover different cultures and expand the horizons of a young, intrepid explorer.

So far, Sebastian has travelled through Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India. Despite this, his journey is far from nearing completion. The last time he gave an update on his progress, Sebastian was preparing to journey through the east of Iran and into western Pakistan – an area which he anticipated to be fraught with danger.

Having successfully completed this stage of the journey, Sebastian looks back on the experience with mixed emotions. "Much of the riding from Yazd, in Iran to Pakistan was based in the desert – it was really challenging as it was my first experience of this type of riding and it was quite an introduction!" he says. "There were some really nice roads in the desert, and then some very tricky dirt tracks. The temperature at one point soared to around 48 degrees Celsius and stayed like that for more than an hour. It was exhausting and very physically demanding. The locals were great though. One car passed me and the guys rolled the windows down. They had air conditioning and looked pretty comfortable, but they shouted encouragement out of the window!"

Although Iran provided some enduring memories of riding in the expanse of the desert, the next phase of the journey felt far more restrictive, which is something

Sebastian regrets. “The next stage of the journey was through what used to be known as Beluchistan, between Iran and Pakistan,” he continues. “Before I started the trip, I knew that this was perhaps the most dangerous region I would travel through. Before I set off from my hotel, heading for Beluchistan, the hotel manager had informed the police and military that I would be travelling through the region. Soon I had an official escort, which stayed with me almost constantly throughout Pakistan. I felt a little frustrated with the escort as progress was slow. It was slightly restrictive but it was for my safety.”



Although Pakistan proved somewhat disappointing for Sebastian, the incentive to continue and arrive in India was more than enough to spur him on. Not only did Delhi deliver the first major service that his F 800 GS had received since departing Munich, it also delivered a friendly face. After riding alone for over four weeks, Sebastian was delighted to meet up with his girlfriend Juliane who arrived in the Indian capital to join him on the trip until he reached Nepal. He is in no doubt that meeting up with his girlfriend provided welcome company.

“Of course, it was great to see my girlfriend!” he says. “The five weeks that she was with me just flew by. I do enjoy riding on my own as you meet so many different people that way, but it was great to be reminded of home. I had been travelling with some Belgian guys throughout Iran – but as happens when you travel – you go your separate ways. From parting company with them, I spent four weeks on my own, so when I met my girlfriend in Delhi, it was great.”



No sooner had the bike been given a new air filter, spark plugs, tyres and brake pads, the pair were on the road again, heading for the mountains of

northern India. "Northern India was fantastic, with sensational scenery and some great riding on offer," reflects Sebastian. "I particularly enjoyed the area around



Ladakh and Minali. The ride from Minali to Leh is perhaps the most famous route in India and I can understand why. The distance between the two points is only 470km, but on average it takes around three days to complete the route.

"This is because the road is high in the Himalayas and takes you through river crossings and over five high passes, each of which are over 4,000m," he continues. "The final pass is at an altitude of around 5,600m. My girlfriend was already feeling sick from the altitude so decided not to go with me on the highest points. Because the bike was lighter, I just carried on very quickly. It was exhausting but an amazing experience."

"This is because the road is high in the Himalayas and takes you through river crossings and over five high passes, each of which

The Himalayan passes offered arguably the biggest test that Sebastian's F 800 GS has faced on the journey so far. After coping with extreme altitude and temperatures and every weather condition known to man, the bike is in its element, according to Sebastian. "The F 800 GS has been superb, particularly around the mountainous Ladakh region in Northern India," he says. "As well as carrying my weight and luggage, it also carried my girlfriend and all her luggage and we never had a problem. The river crossings were 'exciting', but the bike stood up well. Even at over 5,000m above sea level, there was very little loss of power due to the fuel injection, if any."

After conquering one of highest passable roads in the world, Sebastian headed into Nepal, where he took stock of the journey so far, before bidding farewell to his girlfriend and preparing for the next phase of his journey. Over the coming weeks, he will travel south through India, sampling the culture and enjoying the unique experience of travelling thousands of kilometres through foreign lands. Wherever possible he will remain true to his initial intentions of getting 'off the beaten track' and immerse himself fully in the journey.



When he reaches southern India, the next challenge will be to work out how to get his motorcycle across the Indian Ocean to Malaysia, where the final stage of the journey begins. Although plans on how to do this are yet to be finalised, the fun will be in the challenge!

Visit www.seppotage.com for more information on Sebastian's amazing journey.