



TIMBUKTU EXPEDITION

Ride to the ultimate adventure
motorcyclist's destination with Kudu



Customer Information Pack

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Can there be a more evocative destination for the adventure motorcyclist than Timbuktu? Perched on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, the fabled town has been a byword for anywhere remote and inhospitable for centuries. There is much more to the destination than its isolated geographical location however, and it has been a melting pot of cultures for centuries as well as a seat of learning, a regional capital and important trans-Saharan trading hub. Still today you can witness the camel herds leaving Timbuktu destined for the salt mines deep in the Sahara or chat to Tuareg nomads about their culture and history under a shady tree in one of the town's ancient, sandy streets. There is no-where on earth quite like Timbuktu.



Just as important as the destination however, is the journey to get there. The Timbuktu Expedition will pass through much of West Africa, encompassing 4 different countries – each one a unique slice of this rarely travelled region. From the laid back, beach culture of Gambia, to the hot interior of Senegal and Mali, you will get well away from the tourist trail. Negotiating the big and heaving cities of Bamako and Ouagadougou is a mini-adventure all of its own. We will also be taking the chance to visit Dogon Country near to Bandiagara, and our route loops down into Burkina Faso for a slice of West Africa's most hospitable country. By the time you return to Gambia at the end of two and a half weeks of travel, you will have done much more than simply ridden to Timbuktu. We have no doubt that the countries and people of this region will give memories that will stay with you for a lifetime.

ROUTE

Google route maps with images and video now available for the Timbuktu Expedition - please [click here >>](#)

Days 1 - 5

Arrive at Gambia – airport pick-ups can be arranged for you, as well as pre-departure accommodation. The first morning is spent taking over your motorcycle and being introduced to staff, kit and equipment as well as going for an introductory ride-out into the local area. That afternoon you will ride down the Trans-Gambia Highway before setting up camp in the bush.



From here we cross into Senegal and ride eastwards, through Tambacounda towards the Malian border. This road can sometimes be tough going with broken tarmac and endless potholes so expect progress to slow a little. Once in Mali it is a fairly straightforward route to Bamako along fairly new roads, passing through Kayes en-route which is one of the hottest cities in the world. Bamako itself is a vast, heaving metropolis of buzzing mopeds and bustling markets. Crossing the old bridge over the majestic Niger River is a great experience. From here we head north-east towards Mopti and the Sahara beyond.

Days 6 - 10

We stop off at Mopti, 7km down a causeway on the banks of the Bani and Niger rivers. Take a stroll along the waterfront and watch people washing their cars as canoe taxis meander past, and fishermen cast their nets – and all under the warm haze of a West African sunset. Here we can take a breather in a good hotel with pool and cold beers – you will be ready for it by now!





Timbuktu while the Kudu staff take some time to really check over the bikes and kit ready for the second half of the expedition.

From Mopti it is a day and a half's ride up to Timbuktu. We camp out in the desert along the piste road which cuts directly north from the town of Douentza before continuing on to the ferry crossing over the Niger River. Expect a tough 120 mile ride on red, corrugated trails through a hot, dusty but beautiful wilderness. The trail is not technically challenging, but it is hard work for riders and bikes thanks to the pot-holes, bumps and corrugations, and the odd brief sandy section thrown in just to keep you on your toes!

Once over the river it is a short ride to the town itself where we will take a well earned rest day. You can take some time to really soak up the atmosphere of

Our route back takes us to Bandiagara (Dogon Country) and we cut south to Burkina Faso along a scenic and fairly good quality dirt road. Burkina is one of our favourite countries at Kudu, thanks mainly to the laid back and amiable people. It may also have something to do with the abundance of restaurants, street-side cafes and bars where you will quickly strike up a conversation with the locals over a cold Club beer.

Days 11 - 17

From Burkina's capital, Ouagadougou, we turn west to Bobo Dioulasso and begin our journey back to Gambia. Bobo is a great place to visit, once again characterised by an abundance of great roadside cafes and bars and the constant flow of mopeds buzzing along tree-lined avenues. Again we have a nice hotel in which to relax before we head back into the bush. From here we head to the Malian border on a good road which takes us through picturesque villages adorned with children playing under the shade of mango trees who almost invariably stop to wave us along our way.



After our second visit to Bamako we begin the long road westbound. The expedition by now will be well into the routine of bush camping, and most people find that this is something which becomes one of the most memorable and enjoyable aspects of the trip. Back through Kayes and back into Senegal it is 3 nights bush camping on the trot before we are back in English speaking Gambia. Take the

time to enjoy the experience of chatting around the camp fire to the chorus of a thousand crickets, as a warm African breeze flows through our camp.



On our final day we take a different route back into Gambia and different ferry across the Gambia River – the final leg of your Timbuktu Expedition is now at an end. When you arrive back in Banjul it is time for a farewell and celebratory dinner. You will most probably have made lifelong friends on your trip to Timbuktu and through West Africa and most riders will be very keen to keep in contact. Once more we can arrange accommodation for those who want to stay on for a final few days, and airport transfers for those who don't. You have ridden to the ultimate adventure motorcyclist's destination and

explored a fascinating, unique region of the world, but unfortunately it is now time to return to normality... until the next big adventure!

Your Typical Day on the Road

There really is no such thing as a "typical day" when you are riding the Timbuktu Expedition, however the unique way in which we run our trips is designed to give you as much freedom and as many options as possible. You can ride as pairs, in a small group, or with the support team. Most people, quite understandably, do not want to ride in a big convoy, but would much rather have the flexibility and freedom to explore how they want, at the pace they want. For the vast majority of the time, using our GPS waypoints and comprehensive trip notes, you will be able to travel away from the support crew, meeting up at key

places, for lunch, and at the end of the day at your hotel. A guide on a bike will also be there each day and those who wish to stay with the support team are also more than welcome to do so.

The Off-Road Sections

The majority of the Timbuktu Expedition is on either good tarmac, or potholed and broken tarmac which is easily negotiated by any careful rider. There is approximately 350 miles of dirt tracks in total, the main leg being a challenging 240 mile stretch up to and back from the Niger River just south of Timbuktu. You can expect badly corrugated dirt tracks through the desert with the odd patch of soft sand and very testing conditions for riders and bikes. The route is not technically difficult however, and is rideable for any determined off-road beginner. We have taken complete off-road novices along this route before very successfully. The remaining dirt roads are generally flat and fairly easy going. If you are worried about the dirt sections of the route as a beginner then please contact us and we can advise you on how best to prepare for the trip.



Expedition notes

During the trip you will receive comprehensive notes providing you with a wealth of information on all aspects of the route. The detail covering roads, accommodation, food and fuel will mean that you can start the day's ride confident that you know where you are going, and exactly how you are going to get there. Contingency plans in-case of any problems en-route will also be given to you so that if the need arises you can summon help from the Kudu team as quickly as possible.

GPS Technology



For those of you not familiar with GPS (Global Positioning System) Technology, it is used extensively by us to plan and run our expeditions. A GPS is a hand-held device which you can mount onto your motorcycle handlebars, and using satellite technology it will enable you to very easily navigate to any given destination en-route. That could be to meet up with the support crew for lunch, a key petrol station in the vastness of the Sahara, or your hotel accommodation at the end of the day in Dakar. All of the co-ordinates (or "waypoints") that you will need can be pre-programmed into your GPS for you by the Kudu team and you will be given practical instruction on how to use the system during our pre-expedition training session, and also during the expedition itself. You can provide your own GPS, or hire one from Kudu. The most basic model – for example the yellow Garmin eTrex model is perfectly adequate and can be purchased for as little as £65. If you want to upgrade to a better model with a colour map display, then we recommend the Garmin GPSMap 60CSx (pictured) with "City Navigator Europe" maps installed. In addition you will need a handlebar mount which can be purchased from www.expansys.co.uk. You will be able to power your GPS from the bike's battery provided you bring the correct cable with you. Full GPS kits (handlebar mount, power cable and Garmin 60CSx) are available for hire – please contact us for current prices.

EXPEDITION MEMBERS

General attributes and experience needed

The Timbuktu Expedition will be a challenge, however it is an adventure tour, **not** a rally raid or race. This means that at times you can expect to get tired, dirty, hot and frustrated – however we will also ensure that you are able to rest, have some relaxed evenings and experience the culture, sights and sounds of Africa. The qualities you should be able to display to get the most out of the experience are:

- A sense of adventure and a desire to be challenged
- A desire to see the real Africa
- The ability to work as a team
- The ability to endure some tough and tiring days on the road

Riding experience

Your suitability from a riding point of view is easier to gauge. These adventures are not just for very

experienced motorcyclists. It is central to our philosophy at Kudu Expeditions to enable almost anyone, irrespective of background or experience, to achieve truly amazing things. The Timbuktu Expedition is organised in such a way as to be ideal for those with little experience of adventurous travel or trail riding. The duration of the expedition is short and the off-road sections are not too technically challenging and are achievable for any determined off-road beginner.

The principal guidelines we have are as follows:

- You should have held a full motorcycle licence for a minimum of one year.
- You must have covered 2,500 miles in the last year on a bike of 400cc or more.

If you feel that your riding experience is lacking or you hold a license but haven't ridden for years, there is no reason why you can't make the effort to get lots of bike miles under your belt in the weeks leading up to your trip. This will ensure that you are able to handle a motorcycle confidently and safely before you leave. If you have not held your licence for a full year then please contact us – you may still be able to join this expedition.

Who else will be taking part?

Your fellow expedition members will be like you – after an adventure of a lifetime which they will never forget. They may be any age, come from any walk of life and from any country, although we expect most, if not all to be English speakers. We regularly see riders join our trips from Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada in particular, as well as the UK. They may be experienced bikers or relative novices but we can guarantee that there is little chance any of them will have done anything like this before.

TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

Overview

Our unique pre-expedition training and orientation package is designed to ensure that expedition members have confidence in themselves and their equipment prior to departure. All training is included in the price, and all you need to bring is enough money for food and drinks during the day.

Training topics

Over the course of the training package you will cover the following areas:

- General route information
- GPS introduction and practical lesson
- Basic motorcycle maintenance
- Puncture repair
- Safe riding in Africa
- Equipment familiarisation

What will I need to bring with me?

- All personal protective riding clothes and equipment
- Spending money (for non-inclusive meals and drinks)

You will be given much more detailed information about where and when your training day will be held once you have booked onto your trip.

En-Route Training

The first half day of the expedition is also dedicated to easing you into the trip and you will have plenty of time to familiarise yourself with your bike, the Kudu team, our system of GPS navigation and the local conditions. In addition you will be given instruction en-route as and when needed, in particular for the off-road sections.

What if I Cant Make the Training Day?

This really isn't a problem. Attendance is by no means compulsory and those riders coming from outside of the U.K. who are unable to come along will be given the key information and training where required once the trip is under way. It is normal for at least some riders to be unable to attend the pre-trip training due to other

commitments or the fact that they are joining the trip from outside of the UK.

THE MOTORCYCLES

Kudu Expeditions' Motorbikes

The Timbuktu Expedition will be using the new Yamaha XT660 Tenere (pictured) – a robust and comfortable adventure motorcycle. They have been selected for their reliability and strength, as well as their go-anywhere ability. They are well suited to the rigours of African riding and they are also extremely comfortable and easy to ride.

Yamaha XT660 Tenere specifications:

- Single cylinder 4 stroke
- Water cooled
- Chain drive
- Electronic fuel injection
- Electronic ignition
- 17" rear wheel, 21" front
- Continental TKC80 dual purpose tyres



Maintenance

Even if you are riding a Kudu bike you will still be responsible for day to day maintenance and safety checks. In the unlikely event that there is a mechanical problem with these extremely reliable bikes, we should be able to quickly repair it and have you back on the road in no time at all. A daily routine of basic checks will be put in place which will be the responsibility of riders to carry out on the motorcycles they are riding. This will include checks and maintenance on such things as:

- Chain lubrication and tension
- Tyre pressures
- Oil and coolant level
- Brake checks
- Light and indicator checks

Kudu personnel will have their own matrix of more detailed checks to carry out to ensure the bikes stay safe and mechanically reliable. The rigours of Trans-African travel can quickly turn a new, mechanically sound motorcycle into an unreliable and potentially dangerous one if not cared for properly. It is absolutely essential that expedition members take a keen interest in the mechanical upkeep of their machines and you will be given plenty of guidance where this is concerned.

EXPEDITION SUPPORT

What constitutes trip support?

Taking up to 16 vehicles across West Africa is a challenge for people and machines alike. The support vehicles will be driven by employees of Kudu Expeditions and they are equipped to keep our vehicles and riders on the road. They carry emergency medical supplies, spare parts and tools to deal with almost any eventuality. They also carry the majority of expedition members' personal kit and camping equipment to make our night-time stopovers when not in hotels a pleasant and comfortable experience. Bikes do not have panniers and almost all of your kit will be carried on the support vehicle.

Staff

All trips are accompanied by a qualified mechanic, medic or first-aid trained staff member and experienced guide. In addition a cooking rota is carried out under the direction of Kudu staff. Expedition members will be expected to assist with food preparation and general camp administration on a rotational basis when bush camping.

Accommodation

At present the split between rooms/hotels and camping is 50:50. All rooms are shared, however you may opt for a single room when available at your own cost, payable en-route. If you have decided that you have what it takes to ride the Timbuktu Expedition on a motorcycle then desert and bush camping should not be a problem for you. Most people find it a really pleasant and memorable experience, and often prefer it to staying in hotels or official campsites. The support vehicle will carry tables for cooking and washing, and chairs for you to slump into around the camp-fire when darkness falls. The morning routine will usually consist of an early rise, more filling and healthy food for breakfast with cups of tea or coffee, and a quick pack-up ready for the briefing on the day's adventures to come. People tend to find that the routine of bush camping is something that they very quickly become accustomed to, and it can be one of the most worthwhile aspects of the entire trip. We will, however, have plenty of hotel accommodation to give you a chance to re-charge your batteries and get a good night's sleep in a proper bed at regular intervals.

Food

It is essential for the health and overall well-being of expedition members that they are well fed every day. Food will tend to be simple, healthy and filling and much of it will be purchased fresh on a daily basis.

- Breakfast will consist of cereal, toast, eggs, fruit, tea and coffee.
- Lunch will typically be baguettes and fruit.
- Dinner will typically be pasta, rice, locally procured meat or fish, stews, fruit, tea and coffee.

Important note: Please ensure that you inform us on booking if you have any special dietary requirements.

PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

Personal documentation

All personal documentation must be checked prior to departure to ensure it does not become the source of frustrating delays once the journey is under way. It is essential that you make sure your documents are in order with plenty of validity remaining after the expedition ends.

- Passport – it must be valid for 6 months from the end of the expedition and have 3 empty pages.
- Passport photos x8
- Credit/Debit/ATM card (*Visa recommended*)
- Cash (Euros or USD) – traveller's cheques are not recommended for this trip
- Driving license
- International Driving Permit (available from your automobile association e.g. RAC, AA and Green Flag in the UK)
- Photocopies or preferably a digital scan of the key pages of all documents
- Yellow fever vaccination certificate
- Inoculation record book

Visas

Mali Visas – all passport holders must obtain Mali visas prior to travel. These will be obtained through a visa agency and the process will be organised centrally through Kudu. We will require all passports for a minimum of 2 weeks, 8 weeks prior to departure. If you are unable to provide your passport to us during the required period then we will be able to make alternative arrangements to suit you, however there will be an additional charge of £60 per passport.

British and European Union passport holders do not need to obtain visas prior to travel for Gambia, Senegal or Burkina Faso.

Australian and New Zealand passport holders must obtain their Senegal visa prior to travel. This can most easily be done in 48 hours in London just prior to the start of your trip (www.senegalembassy.co.uk). If you are unable to get this visa in person prior to travel, we recommend that you use a London based visa agency such as

Travcour (www.travcour.com) to apply for this visa on your behalf. Please contact us for more information on obtaining this visa.

US and Canadian passport holders must obtain Gambia visas prior to travel. These can very quickly and easily be obtained by post from the Gambian embassy in Washington (see www.gambiaembassy.us).

Flights

You can easily get return flights to and from Gambia for the start and end of the trip. They normally fly on Tuesdays and Fridays (the day before and after the expedition). At the time of writing flights were very cheap indeed (as little as £240 return) using Fly Thomas Cook from several UK airports. An alternative carrier is The Gambia Experience who also fly from several UK airports. Those joining the trip from overseas may either fly direct to Gambia, or via the UK using one of the carriers above. A third alternative is to book through an online broker such as Expedia – please see the web links below for full details and to check current prices:

Fly Thomas Cook	-	www.flythomascook.com
The Gambia Experience	-	www.gambia.co.uk
Expedia	-	www.expedia.co.uk or www.expedia.com

Arrival in Gambia for the start of the expedition

Please let us know what flight you will be arriving in Gambia on, and we will arrange an airport pick-up for you (approx 20 Euro) which will bring you to where the Expedition and staff are based. We will also be able to arrange any pre-trip accommodation for you as required.

KIT LISTS

Motorcycle riding equipment

This tends to be a matter of personal preference, however there are some good guidelines as to what you should be looking at wearing below. If you want our personal recommendations on specific items feel free to contact us by phone or e-mail and we will be more than happy to give them to you.

- Helmet – Normal, full face helmets are perfectly acceptable for this trip and you may also wear a motocross type with goggles if you prefer. The best compromise between the two styles is a motocross helmet with a full visor – e.g Arai Tour X or similar, cheaper brands.
- Jacket/trousers – Easily accessible pockets, vents and synthetic material are best – leather kit will be hot and uncomfortable. It should be able to keep you cool in the heat in particular. It is very unlikely that you will see rain or experience any cold weather during the trip. Try the Hein Gericke catalogue for some good options as well as the Rev'It brand. If you already own kit and are unsure of whether or not it is suitable then please contact us and we will be able to advise you.
- Boots – a tough, high-leg motocross/enduro type is recommended.
- Gloves – 1 x light summer set.

IMPORTANT - Carriage of personal kit

The majority of your personal kit is carried on the support vehicle (bikes do not have panniers) and there are strict limits on the size of baggage that we can accommodate per person. Each rider will receive 2 x tough 40L waterproof bags in which to store their kit and this represents their total allocation of space. If you follow the basic list below as a guideline you will find yourself well equipped to look after yourself throughout the duration of the trip, and you should easily be able to fit it into your allocated bags. Please be aware, if you arrive at the start with excessive baggage it will not be allowed onto the support vehicle and you will have to make alternative arrangements to send it home. The luggage in which you carry your kit on your incoming flight will be able to be stored in Gambia until your return at the end of the trip.

Equipment List

- Small day sack to keep on your bike
- Sleeping bag
- Inflatable pillow

- Roll mat/inflatable sleeping mattress (lightweight Thermarest)
- Head torch
- Sewing kit
- GPS
- Mosquito net and repellent
- Laundry soap
- Penknife (Leatherman or Gerber multi-tool recommended)
- Lighter
- 4 x bungees
- Water bottle/camel pack
- Cable ties

Personal clothing

You can expect the clothes that you wear on a day to day basis to get very dusty and dirty so whatever you bring it may as well be old or at least inexpensive. You may well wish to take some smarter casual clothes for evenings out to good hotels or restaurants in the large cities and this is perfectly acceptable. The majority of the time however, when you are not wearing your riding kit, you will be in casual shorts/light trousers and T-shirt. Dressing smart is not generally practical or desired!

- Light trousers/long skirt x 1
- Shorts x 1
- Swimwear x 1
- T-shirts x 5
- Underwear x 5 sets
- Socks x 5 sets
- Sun hat (wide brimmed or baseball type)
- Sandals/flip-flops
- Light walking boots or trainers
- Sun glasses

Toiletries

- Soap and dish
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Shampoo
- Shaving gel/soap
- Razor and blades
- Ear buds
- Anti-perspirant
- Foot powder
- Moisturiser
- Compact travel towel
- Toilet roll
- Comb/brush
- Sun lotion (a 100% sun blocker is essential for nose and face)

- Insect repellent (we recommend 50% deet at least)
- Wet wipes
- Nail clipper
- Headache tablets/non-prescription pain killers
- Small mirror

Miscellaneous items

- Camera
- Music/MP3 player
- Note-book and pen
- Guide book (e.g. Lonely planet)
- Michelin road map (copies of maps will be given to all riders at the start)

Vaccinations and Health

You must have all the relevant travel inoculations prior to departure and your doctor will be able to advise you on exactly which vaccinations you will need. You should bring your inoculations booklet with you as evidence for local officials and you must have a valid yellow fever certificate. Get a doctor's and dentist's check up before the departure date as we do not recommend using any health services in the countries we will be visiting other than in an emergency. Seek advice from your doctor if you have any concerns about ongoing or previous medical problems you may have had. Make sure he knows the true nature of what it is you are undertaking and if you require any further information regarding the expedition then don't hesitate to contact us.

- Have sufficient anti-malarial tablets to last the duration of the expedition.
- Those who wear them should carry spare glasses in your luggage.
- Equip yourself with a personal first aid kit. They can be purchased cheaply from high-street chemists and as a minimum should contain the following:
 - Plasters
 - Anti-septic cream
 - Immodium
 - Re-hydration sachets
 - First aid dressings
 - Tweezers
 - Headache tablets
 - Iodine or other water purifying tablets

Travel Insurance

Get good travel insurance, which includes all medical costs with repatriation. You must make sure that your insurance company is aware of the nature of the expedition – in particular the fact that you will be riding a motorcycle of 660cc.

COMMUNICATIONS ON THE ROAD

Mobile telephones

Reception is usually available in towns and cities provided you have arranged a roaming facility with your service provider. By far the cheapest means of staying in touch is to take an "unlocked" mobile phone and purchase sim cards locally which is normally quite easily done.

Internet access

Internet cafés are becoming more and more common in African towns and cities and although often quite slow, are cheap and easy to use.

FINANCES

Please visit www.kuduexpeditions.com for current prices

What is included in price?

- Yamaha XT660 Tenere
- Kudu support crew and guide

Mechanical support

- Support vehicle with mechanic
- Spare parts for Kudu bikes
- All equipment oil and fluids required to service and repair Kudu bikes

Administrative support

- Accommodation
 - Hotel room fees (normally based on twin rooms sharing)
 - Tents (1 x tent per person)
- Approximately 75% of meals (all meals provided from the support vehicle)
- Visas for Mali
- Carnets de passages en douane for Kudu bikes
- Communal cooking and eating equipment
- Filtered water for cooking and washing food
- Qualified medic or first-aid trained staff with emergency medical equipment
- Ferry charges

What is not included in price

- Fuel
- Flights
- Miscellaneous border crossing fees
- Sleeping equipment (sleeping bag, roll mat etc)
- Approximately 25% of meals
- Miscellaneous personal camping equipment (torch, penknife etc)
- Medical costs beyond those incurred as first aid. This relates in particular to those incurred to third parties. All participants must have comprehensive medical insurance cover which includes repatriation to their own country.
- Costs incurred conducting independent tourist activity and all park fees.
- Drinking water (readily available throughout Africa in bottled form)
- 3rd party motorcycle insurance. It is a customers' own responsibility to obtain this type of insurance. Assistance and advice will be given by Kudu personnel to enable you to do this during the Challenge.

Spending money

What non-inclusive costs will I incur?

The main non-inclusive costs will be fuel, your flight home and personal spending money on evening drinks at

the bar or a night out somewhere. Depending on how committed you are to keeping your own costs down you may budget as follows – please remember these are very rough guidelines only:

- Fuel - £180
- Personal spending money - £150 to £500 depending on personal budget
- Travel (medical) Insurance - £100
- Road/Bridge Tolls - £35
- Return Gambia flight - £240 using Fly Thomas Cook at time of writing
- Third party motorcycle insurance (purchased en-route) - £80

Getting money in Africa

Euros are now much more popular than Dollars and you should carry them in smaller denominations for ease of changing (20 and 50 Euro notes). Traveller's cheques can be difficult and time consuming to change, and attract poor rates. The remainder can come from the use of ATMs in towns and cities (please note: **Visa** is significantly more widely usable than other brands of credit/debit card in Africa).

How do I join?

By far the easiest way to book your place and pay your deposit is online at the Kudu website – please go to www.kuduxpeditions.com/prices. Payments can also be made by UK cheque or bank transfer. Full details will be given to you with your payment invoice which will be sent to you once you have booked your place on-line.

Finally...

Thank you for taking the time to read through the Timbuktu Expedition information pack. We have tried to make it as comprehensive and informative as possible but it is inevitable that you will have more questions. Please feel free to e-mail them to info@kuduxpeditions.com, or telephone +44(0)1885 490828 for a chat on any aspect of your amazing adventure, and hopefully you will be joining us on the road to Timbuktu soon!

