



# Hogs in the desert

What's an American road hog doing in Tutankhamen territory? Dieter Losskarn went to find out and ended up feeling like a pharaoh cruising beside the Nile.

According to an official Harley-Davidson statement, the worst thing about touring is arriving. To make up for it, the oldest motorcycle manufacturer in the world chose the Port Ghaleb, a luxurious resort hotel at the Red Sea, as a base for travelling the country on their 2009 touring bike range.

But why Egypt, of all places? Touring an Arab country on an American icon – isn't that asking for trouble? And what about the roads, were they any good? As soon as the tour leaders arrived, my worries dissipated. Sherif Begermi was a big, muscular biker type. He not only had a loud voice, but spoke with a strong American accent.

The fun-loving road captain of our V2 convoy belonged to the beer-drinking Cairo Hog chapter, which was a surprise to me: Cairo has a rapidly growing Harley owners' group.

His co-leader was the general manager of the local Harley dealership, a woman named Indji Ghattas, who accompanied us on her orange Springer Softail. In a country where some women still go fully veiled in public, she caused quite a stir, especially at the frequent police stops.

Usually we were whisked swiftly through road blocks by an accompanying police car, but sometimes there was a bit of a discussion. Well, until Indji roared up front and spoke in Arabic. The male uniforms looked amazed and waved everybody through. An attractive, cool, powerful Egyptian woman on a huge shiny American bike was obviously too much for them to handle.

Before the trip, I'd been a bit concerned about the roads. Not anymore.



Especially outside the urban areas, they were in great shape, leading through a barren desert landscape that's a mixture between the Skeleton Coast in Namibia and Death Valley in California. First we went north, following the Red Sea, then turned west towards Luxor.

I must admit it was fun to roar through villages in a convoy with a police car in front flashing blue lights and blasting sirens as people waved and cheered. To our group, it became known as pharaoh-style cruising.

Sherif was in his element, blocking side roads, moving oncoming traffic out of the way by driving into their lane – he wouldn't last a single day in Southern Africa. Uniforms and civilians guarded intersections, leisurely displaying AK47s, handguns and rifles, adding a bit of tension to the already surreal atmosphere.

But there was still time to see, feel and smell the country. There were cows, donkeys, camels and the odd stray dog. Men in long robes wandered through the villages, some sat in little cafés, smoking water pipes or drinking tea out of small glasses.

Enough Travel Channel, what about the 2009 touring bike range? At first glance, the Road Kings, Street and Electra Glides looked like they always do. But there are some major improvements to the previous model. A new chassis is designed to deliver better handling, increased capacity and greater comfort for rider and passenger on all five models tested. I could feel it on the road immediately.

Incorporating a new frame, swing-arm, engine mounting system, wheels and tyres, the revised chassis delivers an almost new motorcycle, while still

*'First we went north, following the Red Sea, then turned west towards Luxor.'*



RIGHT: Children appeared from nowhere to admire the Harleys.

BELOW: The touring bike convoy was well protected by uniformed police and the army.

Bryan Traylor



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OPPOSITE: Egyptian road captain Sherif Begermi on the Road King Classic was in his element, chasing cars out of the way.

maintaining the key Harley styling elements. With the combined feedback of 80-million kilometres driven during the Harley-Davidson 100th Anniversary event in 2003, Harley-Davidson enhanced the touring lineup by introducing a rubber-mounted, 1584cc twin-cam engine paired with a six-speed transmission and an active intake and exhaust system, electronic throttle control (one of my favourites), ABS brakes, a 22,7-litre fuel tank, reduced clutch lever effort, an advanced audio system by Harman-Kardon (nothing better than Bruce Springsteen's 'Born in the USA' while roaring through a desert landscape) and GPS navigation.

All touring models feature air-adjustable rear shocks to accommodate variable passenger and luggage loads. Originally introduced as an option, ABS is now standard on all touring models, a response to customer demand.



The wheel and tyre package is updated, with front-wheel diameter increased to 17 inches from 16 inches on all touring models, except for the Road King Classic, while the width of the 16-inch rear wheel has increased. All touring models are equipped with new Dunlop multi-tread tyres that improve handling and offer up to 25 per cent more rear-tyre tread life. The wider rear wheel accommodates a fat new 180/65B16 tyre.

The components of the Harley-Davidson ABS have been designed and packaged to be virtually invisible, preserving the uncluttered styling of the area around the wheels. Unlike many motorcycle ABS, the

Harley system is not linked, meaning the rider maintains full, independent control of both front and rear brakes.

The electronic throttle control (ETC) featured on all touring models became one of my favourite things to play with during the ride. It's a cruise control, so you can set the speed on one of those long, dead-straight, animal-free desert roads and cruise with both hands off the handlebars, increasing the opportunities to give hand signals. This feature was well used by Sherif and his Egyptian buddy, Hog member and sweeper Hani, who followed the group.

So how did the Harleys handle the frequent speed bumps and occa-



**TOP:** Harley's Electra Glide Ultra tops the touring range.

**ABOVE:** Hieroglyphics? No, compulsory Egyptian number plates.

**BELOW:** Millenia-old monuments on the banks of the Nile meet a Hog.

sional potholes? Quite well, actually. Only two of them lost their end pipes – and they sounded much better afterwards.

And what about Egypt's cultural treasures? Well, we saw them, but in truth they were just nice backgrounds to our rides.

This trip was more about biking than sightseeing. I am sure Ramses wouldn't have been impressed.

But honestly, who cares about Ramses when you can eat up the desert on a Harley and then have a couple of beers at the bar with Sherif and Indji? ■

#### The low-down

Harley-Davidson's 2009 touring bike range consists of five bikes: Road King, Road King Classic, Street Glide, Electra Glide Standard and Ultra Classic Electra Glide.

Prices range from R219 000 to R339 000.

Engine: rubber-mounted, fuel-injected 1584 cc V-Twin, 82hp

0–100 km/h: What are you talking about?

Top speed: Come on, it's a Harley.

Consumption/100 km: between 5,5 and 6 litres/100 km

Fuel tank: 22,7 litres

Seat height: 693 mm

Weight: 332 kg

Six-speed, cruise-drive transmission, Brembo brakes with ABS as standard, redesigned frame, swing-arm and engine-mount system, increased luggage capacity, upgraded suspension, new-style exhaust.

For a similar amount of money, you can't buy anything similar. Remember, you either own a Harley or a motorcycle.

For more information: [www.harley-davidson.com](http://www.harley-davidson.com).

Footnotes Cairo's Harley dealer is planning organised trips on the American Hogs along a similar route to the one described here. You can also rent a Hog in Cairo. Contact Indji Ghattas tel +20-2-2735-1710/12, e-mail [indji@smg.com.eg](mailto:indji@smg.com.eg), web [www.smg.com.eg](http://www.smg.com.eg).



Bryan Traylor

# Wheels etc



### Audi visual

Recently *Getaway* had the opportunity to drive three vehicles from the Audi range: the sexy A3 convertible with overland abilities (left), the attractive A4 Avant station wagon (below left) and the hot S3 hatchback (below right). All of them feature the trademark LED daylight running lights and are very



stylish inside and out. The Cabrio (from R303 500) is ideal for young couples or female singles, the S3 (from R373 000) is recommended for hot-blooded younger males and the sleek Avant (from R303 400) for the family man, who still wants to look cool and sporty. Check out the Audi range at [www.audi.co.za](http://www.audi.co.za).



### An icon relaunched

The most successful Beemer has had a rejuvenating facial. The body of the newest 3-series is slightly wider and longer, following the automobile trend of getting bolder. Prices start at R286 500 for the 320i and the 335i costs R477 000. Web [www.bmw.co.za](http://www.bmw.co.za).



### Topless Beemer

In the same league as Audi's open A3, the BMW 1-series convertible (from R334 000 to R509 800) offers alfresco summer fun. In the end it boils down to personal preference in deciding which topless German you're going to choose. Web [www.bmw.co.za](http://www.bmw.co.za).

# Stuck



On our recent adventure in the Okavango Delta, the river crossing was flooded and our Toyota got stuck. We kept the engine running and, after a few attempts with a hi-lift jack, we managed to get out, but we had to use an aircraft to get into camp until the flood water receded!

*Natasha Wilmot, Botswana.*

If you have photographs of a 4x4 getting stuck, e-mail them to [wheels@getaway.co.za](mailto:wheels@getaway.co.za) or post them to Getaway Wheels, PO Box 180, Howard Place, 7450 Cape Town. You could win a Nissan Securetech recovery kit worth R1 500, comprising a recovery kit bag, nine-metre kinetic energy snatch recovery strap, five-metre pull/winch extension recovery strap, two alloy recovery bow shackles, leather gloves, key ring and Offroad Tactix instruction DVD and manual.



# Join us on a two-wheeled *Getaway* exploration in Namibia

In April, *Getaway* is planning a 10-day adventure through Namibia. It starts from Windhoek, with stopovers at Sossusvlei, Swakopmund, the Doro Nawas Conservancy in Damaraland and Anderson's Camp adjacent to Etosha.

You can either bring your own bike or hire one in Windhoek from our adventure partner, Motorrad Rentals.

Interested? Contact [fatima@ramsaymedia.co.za](mailto:fatima@ramsaymedia.co.za) for details.



**Strap Location**

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