

SANDPOINT

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2011

IMAGINE

Right here,
15,000 years ago.
A giant sheet of ice.
Colossal Ice Age floods.

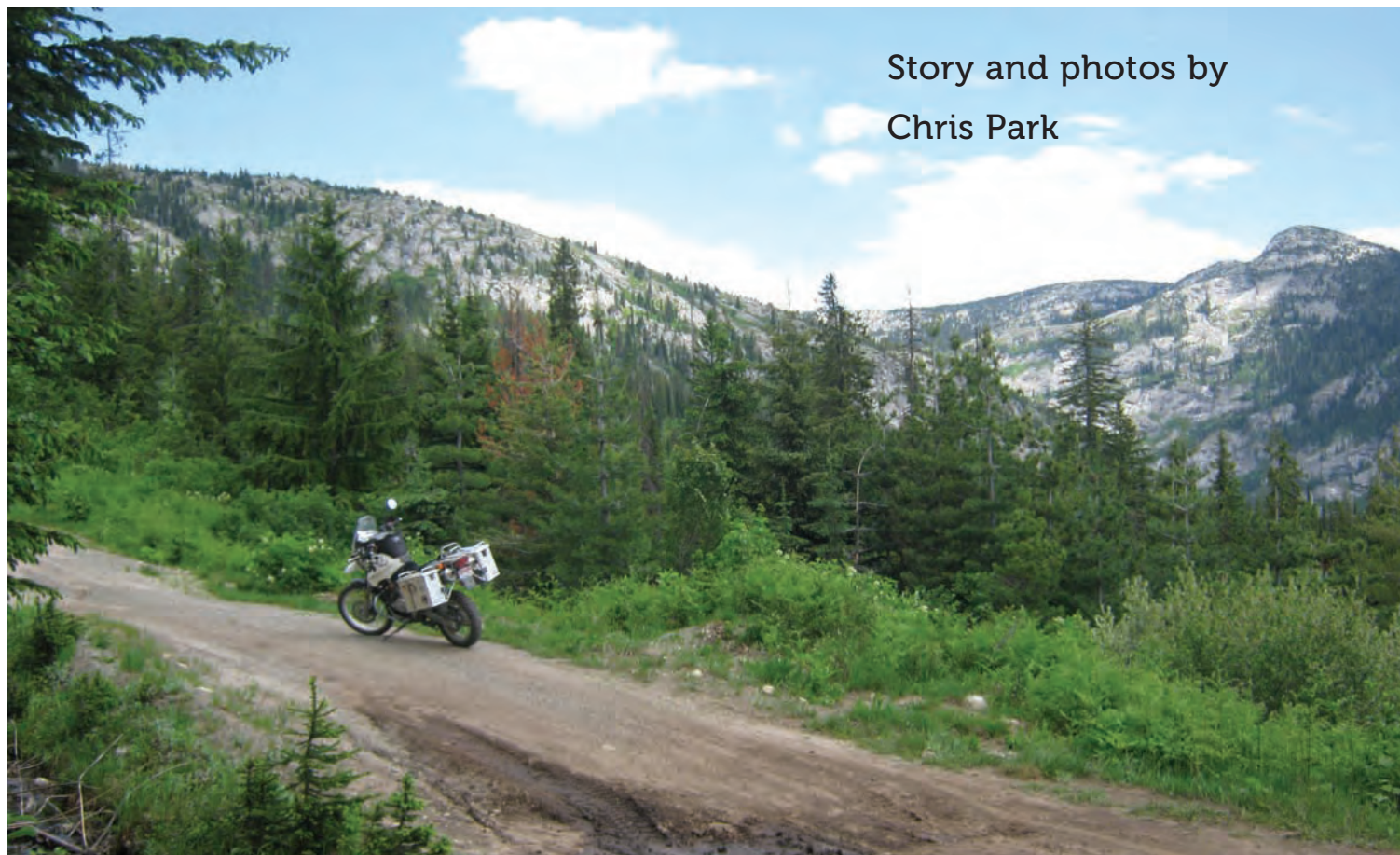


Interview with Nike Air Jordan architect Tinker Hatfield, Adventure Motorbiking, River Paddling, Extreme Plein Air in the Scotchmans, Clark Fork Turns 100, Pend Oreille's Storied Fishery, Calendars, Dining, Real Estate ... and a lot more

Adventure riding

Sport embraces Panhandle's plethora of dirt roads

Story and photos by
Chris Park



My closest friend, Chef Paul Donaghue, planted the seed. It lay dormant for several years, waiting for the right moment to come to fruition. Elements weren't quite right: the timing, the conditions. It took a tragic, life-changing event to shake this seed from its sleep. Donaghue, too young, too soon, was taken by cancer. He left a gift that would change my life, a gift that would open doors and expand my horizons. By then it was clear. I would do this. It was my destiny.

Today, I'm riding Donaghue's motorcycle: a BMW 650 Dakar. I am honoring his passion whenever I ride – embracing the world of dual-sport motorcycling. This has opened my eyes to the universe he wanted to share with me

and taken me down roads I never knew I would travel. Donaghue rides with me, always there as my guide, cohort and companion.

In the wide scope of motorcycling, a dual-sport bike is colloquially defined as an "on-off road bike." Think "dual purpose." It is also commonly referred to as adventure riding – with a strong emphasis on riding a minimal amount of pavement to access dirt roads. That's not to say "dirt biking" either. These are heavier bikes, weighing more than 400 pounds, which are best suited for the plethora of old logging roads so common in the Northwest.

They can be loaded down with camping gear. Their superior suspension makes travel on unmaintained dirt roads smooth, comfortable and quick.

One of the author's adventure rides took him north of Upper Priest Lake on Forest Road 655

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They handle like a sports bike (think crotch rocket) on the pavement. They go hundreds of miles using only a few gallons of fuel. These bikes are quiet, efficient, responsive, affordable and seriously fun. It's no surprise that dual-sport enthusiasts are the fastest-growing demographic in the motorcycle market.

Local John Olson, who rides dual sport every month of the year says, "Adventure riding is not a matter of life and death, it is far more important than that."

How can one become so enamored with a machine? A dual-sport motorcycle is more than a machine, it's a vehicle: a medium for communicating, expressing

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and accomplishing some of the very best things in life, such as freedom, excitement, adventure, travel, nature and camaraderie. Donaghue once described these optimum experiences as "T-1 moments." These are times when the extraordinary quality of that particular experience

The author explores Lightning Creek drainage, a favorite ride (courtesy Black Dog Cycle Works)

places you, the lucky one, in the top 1 percent of all the people on Earth.

Historically, motorcycles were origi-

ADVENTURE ROUTES AND RESOURCES

WANT TO TRY DUAL-SPORT adventure riding? Here's the quick and dirty lowdown. It helps if you love to read and study maps or tinker with your GPS and that you're somewhat good at it. Make sure to only do this while stationary please! It also becomes more important, the farther you go, to have your basic mechanical-troubleshooting-and-fixing-skills down, especially tire changing.

Of course, getting to wherever you're going and back safely is also a key component; therefore, having good riding skills, equipment and street smarts will greatly improve the quality of any adventure ride. It takes some time and effort, like anything worthwhile, but once you gain confidence and everything begins to sync, the adventure possibilities go exponential!

An excellent resource for those wanting to learn how to ride a motorcycle safely (and make your license test a breeze) here in Idaho is the Idaho STAR Motorcycle Safety Program. Three-day, Basic I and II classes are held in Sandpoint. Check www.idahostar.org.

For those already involved in the sport, new to the area or planning for summer fun in Sandpoint, don't miss the 2011 North Idaho Selkirks Rally. Kurt and Martha Forgét of Black Dog Cycle Works (263-0438) will be hosting this event Aug. 12-14 from their beautiful

property on Upper Pack River Road. See all the details about the rally and a bunch of other cool stuff at www.blackdogcw.com.

To get a glimpse at how some folks are traveling the back roads of the world on dual-sport motorcycles, Horizons Unlimited has great trip reports and an excellent discussion forum as does Adventure Rider; see www.horizonsunlimited.com and www.advrider.com. The Idaho Adventure Motorcycle Club is definitely worth a look: www.motoidaho.com.

A truly great story about a couple of guys, Ewan McGregor (yes, the actor Ewan McGregor) and Charlie Boorman, planning for, training for, and ultimately completing a trip around the world on dual-sport motorcycles is "The Long Way Around," available as a book or documentary series on DVD.

A classic, fun, and nontechnical ride here in northern Idaho is from the town of Clark Fork; take Forest Service Road No. 278 down the eastern side of Lake Pend Oreille, all the way to Farragut State Park. Another is Twentymile Creek Road No. 408 just north of Naples. This remote road winds its way up and over to Troy, Mont. By the way, Idaho has more than 30,000 miles of dirt and two-track roads, so the possibilities for adventure motorcycling are virtually unlimited.

- Chris Park

nally designed to go on dirt roads. By the 1940s, there were enough developed roads and highways that the shift to street bikes began in earnest. Now, however, the motorcycling trend is returning to its history and embracing its dirty roots. Demographically, many dual-sport riders (not including me at the moment) are coming from higher income brackets and represent a desirable market for towns like Sandpoint. Dual-sport riders tend to be far more ecologically friendly and mindful than their often-controversial dirt bike cousins. The dual-sport bikes have efficient, quiet, four-stroke engines. Riders stay on established roads. Dual-sporters also have an affinity for safety, gearing up with a good helmet, boots and protective, highly visible clothing.

In tune with the national trend, Black Dog Cycle Works, a local dual-sport-focused company, has seen business more than double in the last couple of years. It was Chef Paul who encouraged Black Dog owners Kurt and Martha Forg t to visit Sandpoint for a motorcycle ride and ultimately to relocate here. He later introduced us, and we have since become close friends. The Forg ts obviously agree that this area has endless opportunities for dual-sport riding. This summer they will host the second annual North Idaho Selkirks Rally, Aug. 12-14, bringing 100 or so dual-sport enthusiasts to Sandpoint to explore, share and learn.

For those who love to hike, fish, camp or hunt, dual-sport bikes offer quick, cheap and fun access to favorite spots. From Sandpoint one can take a scenic trip for a few hours, an exceptional adventure for a couple of days or block out some serious time to take the trip of a lifetime.

"I love riding the mountain roads: the Yaak to Koocanusa, Quinn's Hot Springs to 9-mile Ranger Station and Bayview to Thompson Falls to name a few," says Olson.

To that list I would add: Trestle Creek to Lightning Creek, Priest Lake to Sullivan Lake, Bunco Road around

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RIDING

the east side of Lake Pend Oreille and accessing the endless miles of dirt roads in the Coeur d'Alene drainage from Clark Fork.

Whether on a long trip or a short one, riding dual-sport bikes, or any motorcycle for that matter, requires total concentration. It's an all-encompassing activity: senses are on high, reflexes always ready, body and mind are focused. Like meditation, thoughts are concentrated – centered on staying safe, upright and moving forward. A good ride effectively cleanses the mind and spirit of any unwanted debris.

Olson, fond of solo travel, acknowledges this when he said, "I feel more available to my muse running alone."

When I ride, I've got Donaghue with me. I know his hands gripped the handlebars as I now do and his eyes looked past this very same windscreen. I wear his boots on my feet, his gloves on my hands, his helmet protects my head, and he resides in my thoughts and heart on every ride. 



Heading up the Lightning Creek drainage, the author's wife, Lizbeth Zimmerman, and Kurt Forgét take a break on Road 419 on the way to Char Falls



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