

RIDE A LONG WAY ON A VINCENT

Peter Sprot's 1952 Series C Touring Rapide is no pampered show bike. He's covered more than 9000 foreign miles on it in the last few years

DON'T HIDE IT, RIDE IT

"If you own an old bike you'll get much more enjoyment from it if you use it. As the value of some bikes like Vincents rises disproportionately, more and more of them are being wrapped in cotton wool and kept as investments to be used rarely, if ever. But there's a very good chance the bike will come back in one piece, and you'll have had the trip of a lifetime."

GREAT TOURING BIKES DON'T HAVE TO BE FAST

"I've made friends with a Spanish baker who also owns Vincents. Inspired by my trip he recently rode to the Arctic Circle, but he chose his Comet rather than the Black Shadow. You see more on a slower bike, and there's something to be said for the relative simplicity of a single. I'm restoring a 1920s AJS at the moment and I'd love to take that on a big trip. The Vincent can keep up with motorway traffic so my speed is dictated by how tiring it is. I don't have a screen or fairing so I find if I sit at much more than 70mph I get tired quicker and end up doing less miles in the day. Don't stay on main roads all the time; you miss so much. It's the journey not the destination that matters. Take your time, stop frequently. Take a day off if you find a nice place. More than 400 miles a day gets a bit much."

A PLAN B IS GOOD IDEA

"I was on the busiest motorway in Germany, heading north into Denmark when the bike ground to a halt with a banging noise. When I took off the cover it was clear a few teeth had sheared off the magneto gear. I had a spare with me but it wasn't great, so I called my friend John in England who checked the owners' club magazine and discovered a member in Germany. 'Germany's a pretty big place,' I was thinking as I made the call, but it turned out he was 15 minutes away, and what's more he had the gear I was after in great condition. He loaned it to me and I was able to complete my trip, get his gear reconditioned and sent back to him. Interestingly though, John also posted my predicament on the Vincent owners' club



Luggage includes lots of spare pairs (new old sock)



forum and within hours a member had phoned my wife offering to send a gear out to my hotel by DHL for the following day. The best tools you can take are your mobile phone and your credit card – if everything else fails they can get you help. If you're confident you could tear the bike down and fix the problem, take all the tools you'll need. A spare tube and levers will ensure you won't need them. Take the workshop manual – if nothing else it can provide good bedtime reading."

PUSH YOURSELF

"Planning one trip I realised we'd pass close, relatively speaking, to the Arctic Circle. The maps came out and we also realised that if we came around the top of the Baltic Sea we could return home a completely different way. As we added up the miles and realised the trip was getting close to 4500 miles Graham asked if I was sure I wanted to go such a long way on a 57-year-old bike? 'It's the difference between a ride and an adventure,' I told him, trying not to look terrified."

CLOTHES VERSUS SPARES – IT'S A BALANCING ACT

"I carry tools, spare parts, chain spray, inner tube, tyre levers and a litre of oil. I limit clothing to two pairs of trousers, three sweatshirts, two t-shirts, three pairs of socks, three pairs of underpants and a pair of shoes. I wash clothes in my hotel room sink, using the shampoo or soap."

NORWAY VERSUS SWEDEN

"Swedish roads are mostly straighter, smoother and well maintained. I'm told that whenever possible Norwegians come into Sweden if they're heading south. Norwegian roads have unexpected holes, humps and bumps and, because of the mountains, they are always winding up or down. That said, Norway has some of the most spectacular scenery in the world."

NORWEGIAN IS GOOD

"To cure trout, take thin slices of raw trout and cover them in a mixture of equal parts salt and sugar, with some white pepper and plenty of dill. Roll it in cling

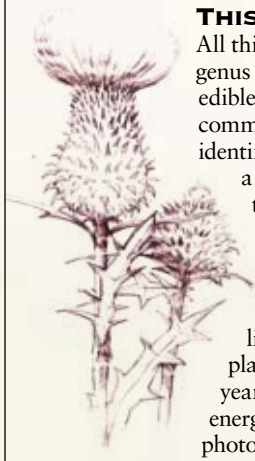


The superb N82 between Kalamata and Sparta in Greece

FORAGE A B-ROAD HEDGE

If you find yourself miles from the nearest tea room or pub you can stave off the pangs with these common hedgerow plants

THISTLE ROOTS



All thistles under the genus *Cirsium* are edible. The most common is spear thistle, identified by leaves with a long spear-like tip. These plants are biennial, meaning they take two years to complete one life-cycle. The plant uses the first year to build up energy stores by photosynthesis, and tucks this energy away

in the roots. The roots swell as a result, full of sugary, starchy goodness. If you can catch the plant after the end of its first year of growth, the roots will be at full size. Once the plant hits its second year, it will use this energy to flower, and its roots will shrink. Simply dig up the roots, scrape off the excess mud and place them in the embers of your fire. Roast them for a few minutes, pull them out, scrape off the black skin and gorge on the starch.

OAK ACORNS

Oak acorns are, hands down, one of the most nutritious wild foods, containing among other things, hard-to-find fats and proteins. The problem is they contain an acid called tannin which will make you vomit like a sick dog if you consume too much of it. To remove the tannins you have two options. If you are short of time, you can simply 'de-har' the acorns and roast them in the embers of your fire until golden brown. Then shell and eat them. Better still, boil the de-shelled acorns in multiple changes of water, leaching out the tannins more aggressively. This mush, crushed and roasted on a hot rock, is delicious and sustaining.



film and put it in the fridge for 48 hours. It makes the best sandwich I've ever tasted."

KRAKOW IS STUNNING

"My experience of Poland was coloured by trouble with the bike and bad weather but Krakow was extraordinary. Buchlovice in the Czech Republic is easily reached from Krakow and that too is a treasure. When we were there we found a beautiful little hotel in one of the most charming places you could imagine – and so cheap."

TAKE MAPS

"A sat-nav loaded with the right maps could be a God-send. Just don't be a slave to it. Some things, particularly planning a route, are easier on a map."

CLEAN IT

"Take rags – you'd be surprised at the things you find that are loose or missing when you clean the bike. Check the chain tension every day and oil the cables if you've had a lot of rain (I dip a twig in the oil tank and let it drip down the cable)."

VINCENT SERIES C TOURING RAPIDE

Many valuable qualities have made this a costly machine



998cc V-twin ♦ 45bhp ♦ 110mph ♦ £26,000-£34,000

PRE-TRIP CHECKLIST

- ♦ Check everything to do with the clutch for wear
- ♦ Make sure the charging system is good
- ♦ Ensures the brake shoes have plenty of life left – they'll feel the pace