

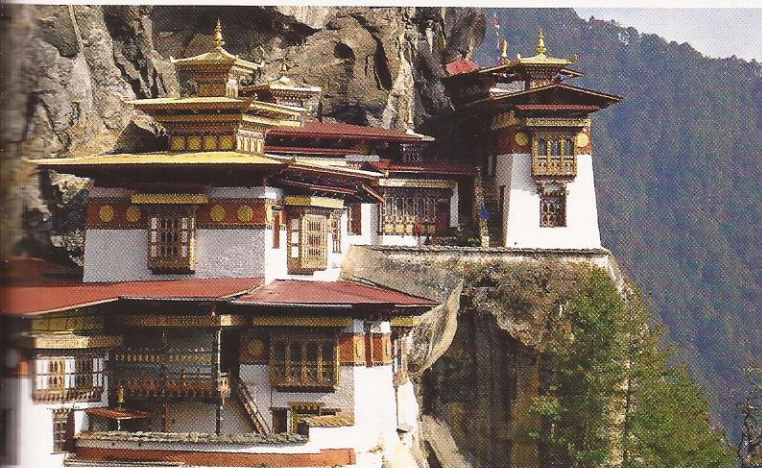
Above Mike and Denise Ferris. **Main & bottom strip** Some of the fantastic sights and destinations featured in *World on Wheels* including Dadés Gorges, Morocco; Blue Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey; the Andes in South America; Tibetan monks in the Himalayas and Tiger's Nest Monastery in Bhutan.

World on Wheels

Aussie adventure couple, Mike and Denise Ferris, are breaking through to the small screen in their new six-part TV/DVD program, *World on Wheels*.

Interview Rennie Scaysbrook

Photography Courtesy WOW



If you have the spirit of adventure riding through your veins, you're never satisfied. You're always looking for the next place, the next ride, new people and new experiences.

For Mike and Denise Ferris of well-known motorcycle safari company, Ferris Wheels, this spirit of adventure has been integral to their personal and business lives. The duo has criss-crossed the globe, leading tours from the Himalayas to South America and even as far as Iceland, and now they have a six-part TV series that aired on 7Mate at the start of October – *World on Wheels*.

The show documents each one of their destinations and was shot over the past 12 months, and is the first program of its kind – especially true for a husband and wife team – to get mainstream network television coverage in Australia.

I took time out with Denise to find out more about this exciting venture that is further helping to break down motorcycle stereotypes in Australia. ►

How long have you had the idea to turn the tours into a TV series?

Mike has wanted to make a motorcycling-related TV series for around 15 years. He'd explored the possibility once or twice, but nothing ever got off the ground. Then, about five years ago, we made a promotional DVD of some of our tour footage with a local production company – Think Tank Digital/Thought Films, which worked really well for us.

Robin Newell, head of Thought Films, Mike and I thought we could do more with what we had started and so talked about producing a six-part TV series of every destination we travel to around the globe – and so *World on Wheels* was born!

What were the logistics in organising a camera crew?

We kept things very simple in the filming department and invested more in post-production. Robin Newell was our producer and cameraman, and in the space of 12 months he came to every destination with us – not a bad job!

Robin rode on the back of a motorcycle through Nepal and Bhutan, Turkey, Morocco, the Dalmatian Coastline, the Indian Himalaya, Peru and Bolivia. We supplemented his footage with a lot of high-quality GoPro film our tour participants and we had taken. Plus, we employed a lot of people back in Australia to work on the footage and create the show.

As we travelled around the world over the 12 months of filming *World on Wheels*, there were a lot of logistics to be organised in getting cameras in and out of the destinations. The Moroccan government, for example, had something to say about Robin and his equipment arriving into Casablanca – this resulted in him being ushered away and having to travel two hours to the capital, Rabat, for a thorough grilling before he could proceed with filming us around Morocco for three weeks.

We had to rig up one or two motorcycles in each destination to be able to carry a cameraman sitting backwards, filming at all sorts of heights and angles. We perfected this approach over the year so we could replicate it around the world; most of the time we found a narrow pole and strapped this to the back seat so he could balance himself and the camera at 100km/h. He loved riding so much he now has a licence!

Did some of the inspiration for the series come from shows like *The Long Way Round*?

The original idea was born long before *The Long Way Round* but there's no question we were inspired by what Ewan (McGregor) and Charley (Boorman) did. Their show had people all over the world watching, even non-motorcyclists.

We met Charley a few years ago when he was first out in Australia promoting *The Long Way Round* at the Sydney Motorcycle Show and he was signing his DVD. He's a great guy and it was fantastic that people were queuing up to buy the DVD and checking out our tours at the same time – there's a



real synergy between what Ewan and Charley experienced and what people can experience during one of our international motorcycle safaris.

They did an excellent job with *The Long Way Round* and we consider it a great compliment that people have started referring to us as the Aussie version of Ewan and Charley. We hope we can provide as much entertainment to people as they have and that our series will also encourage people to get up off the couch and get out and enjoy this amazing world in which we live, preferably on two wheels!

Because we are a husband and wife duo, we anticipate our series will have a very broad appeal for both men and women.

Were you involved in the editing process at all?

Yes, our producer Robin Newell is located close to us on Sydney's Northern Beaches and this made working together on many aspects of the series easy for us, when we were in the country!

We agreed up front on the overall style and feel that we wanted for the series. We wanted *World on Wheels* to be entertaining and humorous as well as inspiring. Robin and his team did really long hours in the studio, making hard decisions about which piece of footage to put in and which to leave out, because each episode only allows for 24 commercial minutes of content. We reviewed each episode several times to ensure that it was on track and that the essence of each destination was being captured in the episode.

How has the show been received in New Zealand so far?

The series has been a fantastic hit with my mum... and my brother! But seriously, all the feedback we have received indicates it was a big hit in the Land of the Long White Cloud! We've done some follow up radio interviews and a lot of people are now talking about *World on Wheels*.

Are you seeing increased bookings for your trips on the back of the show?

One of the ways we know *World on Wheels* was such a big hit in NZ is the number of enquiries we have been receiving from Kiwis to purchase the boxed DVD set of the series. Business is booming and a lot of people want to explore the world on two wheels after seeing how much fun it is on their TV screens.

It's one thing to watch it in the comfort of your

lounge room – it's another thing entirely to ride across the salt pans of Bolivia or along the Black Sea Coast – you know you are alive!

What were some of your favourite moments from the filming process?

One of our tour participants accidentally knocked a giant phallus off its perch in Bhutan while we were filming – that's funny every time we watch it! It of course made the DVD outtakes. There are a lot of giant painted and wooden phalluses in Bhutan by the way; they are a common symbol of fertility. It is the land of gross national happiness after all!

A not so favourite moment of mine is when I was captured on film, in front of all of my group, dumping my Royal Enfield in a deep water crossing on one of the high Himalayan passes. I've never done this before or since, but no one will ever believe me now that it's captured on international television for all to see. I had to ride the rest of the day in wet gear; across the Tibetan Plateau – all in a day's work...

Are there plans for another series in 2014?

We don't have any immediate plans for another series but we'd love *World on Wheels* to be such a popular series on Australian television that the Seven Network approaches us for the making of a sequel!

Are there any new tours to areas you haven't been to in the works for 2014?

Well, our Inspiring Iceland tour is a new destination for us; we only introduced this tour for the first time in 2013. The inaugural tour was a resounding success; 24 people returned home from 15 days riding around Iceland, completely exhilarated and alive! Iceland is proving so popular for us we have scheduled two tours for next year and the first one is already booked out!

As far as additional touring destinations go, we always have 'the next place' we want to go and explore. We have plans to do a reconnaissance early next year in new lands, so people will have to keep an eye on our website (www.ferriswheels.com.au) for when we announce the next exotic destination.

Get the DVD

Those that want to get their hands on the DVD can grab their copy go to www.worldonwheels.tv.

