

## TRAIL RIDING IN SOUTHERN SPAIN

Just been for three days trail riding in the mountains of southern Spain with a company called Redtread and it was amazing.

First morning was mainly dirt trails down to a motocross track where we were given some instruction on general riding and cornering techniques. Then it was off to a local restaurant for lunch where you had a great choice and some of the guys sampled the swordfish recommended by Dougie (the sweeper). While we were eating, Dougie checked the bikes over and topped up oil before it was off into the mountains to play for the afternoon. The trails here are mainly gravel and the views incredible, although the sheer drops in places can be a bit sobering!



....with 30 degrees in October, regular stops for rest and water required

Day 2 and everyone was looking a little tired and sore, but it soon disappeared when we got onto the bikes.

Today we tackled slightly more challenging trails and travelled further. There was one particular bit with a rocky climb and dry-stone walls each side that could have been in the Yorkshire Dales. It was around 6.30pm when we got back and some of the bikes (DRZ's & CCM's) were running dry at the end so I guess we had covered around 150km.



....trails were mainly rock and gravel, note the generous run-off before the vertical drops!

Day 3 we seemed to drop down into a valley, through a water crossing, then a massive climb up zig-zagging rocky trails that never seemed to end. There were also some soft sandy sections that sapped your strength and almost caught me out several times. We reached a viewing point (see below) that looked down into the mountains and valleys and the view was absolutely stunning. Here we got chatting to a couple of elderly Canadian walkers who were really friendly and wanted their picture taken with us (just like in the UK!). In fact, everyone we met, local people, walkers, goat herders etc were all so friendly and waved when we passed. The only exception was a park ranger who seemed to be upset that some of the faster boys at the front had been exceeding the 30km/hr speed limit and met him travelling in the opposite direction. Fortunately they passed on a straight and not a corner, as the only run-off on these trails is usually 500' vertically downwards.

We carried on to a really nice ride with a blast through a forest road, slowing down to pass wild horses, and then climbing up a steep rocky section to reach the summit of a mountain at 6,000 feet.



...hundreds of miles of brilliant trails winding around the mountains



...highest point at 6,000 feet

I looked for some while to try and pick the best outfit running these type of tours. There are four companies in this area of Spain and with the feedback I got from the DR-Z & TBM forums I came up trumps. Redtread is professionally run by a couple called Ian & Sally who cannot do enough to make your stay as enjoyable as possible. We booked a cheap flight from Blackpool airport and it was no problem that we turned up at 3.30am, even though they had a one day tour the next day. One of the reasons for choosing them was that the top notch accommodation and facilities are all "on site", so you are not "farmed out" to local hotels. The local village of Competa is only a short walk away and is full of excellent bars and restaurants which are extremely good value.

The guys that I rode with were a great bunch. Three were from Northern Ireland and at times the craic/banter was side-splitting. I took my wife and I was relieved to find out that one of the guys had taken his partner, so the girls spent the day lounging around the pool and eating/drinking (it's a hard life).

If you are considering doing this type of thing, don't hesitate, do it! A word of warning though, you need to be reasonably fit. I thought I was fairly fit, but after the first day every muscle and bone ached. You are riding for 6 or 7 hours a day and the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy it. You also need to make sure you ride well within your limits. The trails can be dangerous and the consequences of missing a corner or meeting a 4x4 on a bend do not bear thinking about. So be careful, do it and enjoy it, it will be an unforgettable experience.

Tony Davenport