



My Black Sea Adventure

with Rožle of Clutch Motorcycle Tours - www.clutchmototours.com

7500 kilometres in 26 days of adventure, culture and enjoyment.

Nessebar, Bulgaria is our starting off point, heading east, we are all riding late model BMW Gs, perfect for 400 kms per day on fast highways and twistie roads in the mountains. Our riders, Andrew Stevenson, an Aussie Ulyssian, Cindy and Greg from the USA, who transported their own bike and I pillioned behind my friend Rožle. Tomo was our back up van driver.

Moving through Bulgaria we hugged the Black Sea coast, passing old town villages with cobblestone streets, then moved into the mountains to the remote part of Bulgaria as we headed for Turkey, our first border of the trip.

With all our documentation examined and cleared, we then set off onto a six lane highway into Istanbul for our rest day. We toured the Grand Bazaar to find that all that glitters is not gold, and, interestingly, herbs and spices for any sexual pleasure were also available. Then enjoyed an alcohol-free party boat cruise on the Bosphorus in the evening.

On leaving Istanbul, we headed for the Blue Mosque for a photo opportunity and then we made our way through remote villages and plantations of almonds and hazelnut groves toward Sinop on the south coast of the Black Sea. The cobblestone roads and wet conditions made for a challenging ride, a trap for the unwary or overconfident. We also had

to pass through roadworks with thick, white sticky mud, unfortunately, two bikes went down in the ooze. After getting through the obstruction, we found a garden hose and cleaned the bikes up as best we could. (Vic would have been very pleased that Rožle did not drop me in the mud).

From a turquoise, sparkling Black Sea we headed a further 300kms to Ordu to ride the ropeway 450 metres above the city. Then 470 kms onto Artvin in the mountains, we quickly climb 1850 meters, with snow caps in the distance, flip flop around the mountains, through numerous tunnels until we are pulled over by the constabulary for exceeding the 80 kph limit. Fined 206 Turkish lire, (74.32 AUD) pay when you leave the country.

Artvin has breathtaking views of the valley below and our hotel accommodation was magnificent. As we rode through the countryside admiring the crops, which are ready for harvest, our fuel gauge was low. Luckily we met a family who were generous enough to drain fuel from their scooter. Ramadan was in force and no cafes were open, however, we found a store where we bought cheese, bread, tomatoes and water and we sat on the side of the road to have our banquet. After this feast, we then climbed to a height of 2470 meters where the air was cool and the snow was thick by the roadside. Back down through the valley, the scenery changed and we saw little wooden houses with cow dung piles as their only means

of heating. Very primitive, but we were in a remote part of Turkey.

Arriving at the Georgian border our document examination was arduous. We spent three hours here while the van was put through a scanner with all the contents. The scenery

highway, as local roads are potholes, sand and loose gravel. A break at Bartolommeo Best River Resort was most welcome with wonderful hosts who treated us to a fast speed boat ride on the river Dnepr. Odessa was our next port of call, 630 kms away, the longest day and requiring careful manoeuvring on the "Ukrainian Highway." More wheat fields here plus sunflowers, we passed the Dniester Hydroelectric dam built in 1927 with all the communist symbols being removed in 2016.

Arriving in Odessa we had time to sample the local beer and fresh seafood making for a great rest day after a long ride. There are many and varied historical sites here including museums, catacombs, the Potemkin steps, Grand Opera House, The 12th Chair ... and a Macca's.

We rode into Moldova for another passport stamp and on to Chisinau to ride through some of the famous 200 kms of tunnels of Milestii Mici Winery. This was followed by lunch and being serenaded by local musicians and of course wine sampling. It holds the Guinness book of records for having over 2 million bottles of wine. Just a wonderful experience.

Romania was our next passport stamp and this is gypsy country. We rode past donkeys or horses pulling carts of straw and some with waving families. The roads were flat and straight heading for the fast sweepers and mountains in front of us. We stayed in Constanta overnight in a beautiful hotel nestled on the Black Sea. We walked along the promenade seeing the abandoned casino built in 1921, which then served as a hospital in WW11. Currently, the casino is guarding the sea.

We headed back into Bulgaria, this was my last border check and getting the stamp was very easy. This border check works in the same building as the passport check and the paperwork is just passed through to the other side. Back in Nessebar Tomo was waiting with our cold glass of champagne. It was the most memorable journey, an epic adventure now sadly over.

Many thanks to Rožle and the Clutch team.

Lyn Lesslie #16174

changed to green and lush vegetation sprinkled with wildflowers. Roads were in good condition and we headed into Vardzia to the cave Monastery carved out of solid rock in 1180. We crawled through small passages that were interconnected. As Georgia is a Roman Catholic country we found the wine and food was bliss after the constraints of Turkey during Ramadan, they even had pork on the menu.

The Russian border was a breeze to get through and when all was to found to be in order, we headed down the highway towards Moscow stopped every so often by police checkpoints along the way. The food bowl of Eastern Europe surrounded us with enormous wheat fields, potatoes, corn, cherries and beetroot, for their famous Borsch soup, all flourishing. Meeting some Russian friends, we were shown some real Russian hospitality and were introduced to some Russian vodka, dancing, and eating and enjoying the evening.

A short ferry trip across the Kerch Strait to Crimea broke the journey, then on to Yalta for a rest day. This was an opportunity for another ferry trip to Swallow's Nest Castle, an absolute must see. Yalta is full of history, museums and wineries. I loved walking and dancing along the promenade in the footsteps of history. Unfortunately Greg dropped his bike and Cindy broke her wrist and she was flown back to the USA for treatment.

Krasnodar was an overnight stop with the next day destination being Rostov on Don, followed by 550 km day to Kharkov. They were good roads but with many, many trucks all heading for Moscow, fortunately they were courteous and aware of motorbikes. We stopped at a truck stop for refreshments and relief which was an was an experience in itself - it was a long drop.

We took a short cut on a rough road to Belgorod to visit the Kursk Battle museum to absorb some more history. This is a great museum for Military enthusiasts.

Ukraine is the next border with Dnepropetrovsk being the destination. We had 250 kms of highway travel with fields of sunflowers all in bloom along the way. We stay on the

