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LOSING MY A MANIFESTO OF SORTS

Perhaps there's more to overlanding than just the ride, a change in geography, or our love affair with motorcycles.

Motorcycling, especially over long distances, can offer up meditative-like states separate from the apparent *raison d'être* of our journeys. Let's call these getaway places "Helmet Time."

Lately I've been contemplating the notion of *Helmet Time*. Although it may have different meanings to different riders, I'd like to offer up how I experience it.

Helmet Time is most likely to occur when the *mind* is preoccupied by fundamental survival, giving what I assume is our true selves the opportunity to get on with the show. Therefore, it needs to be separated from any category resembling *thinking*. In this state of "mindlessness" is a far less cluttered form of contemplation, where disengaging the *mind* is key, and refreshingly unfettered points of view can exist.

This may be an unusual way of looking at the value of *mental* distraction, and more than a little unconventional in that most consider "thinking" to be a necessary and important process. I don't. Indeed, *thinking* may just be the most wasteful and hopelessly outmoded activity of all human endeavors.

Could it be the state of *mindlessness* we seek? I may be erroneously substituting "mind" and "thinking" for what should be other terms. But, assuming this premise is even remotely correct, then *Helmet Time* can get us around the clap-trap, squeaky cogs and rusting steam engines that make up the *mind*, to experience life in far less inhibiting ways. By getting the *mind* out of the way, so go many of the facades that masquerade as living and ultimately hinder meaningful experience. More often than not, these ineffective and dysfunctional *mental* processes no longer serve survival purposes, anyway.

Along with this form of disengagement go fear of the unknown, and its camouflaged cousin, the tendency to over plan. Seasoned riders often refer to the serendipitous approach to travel—where when in trouble someone always shows up to help; a breakdown becomes the best part of an adventure; or a person met by chance in some remote part of the world turns into a friend for life. Serendipity marks the often intensely unforgettable and life-changing events that happen when we let go of the *mind's* stranglehold, to simply experience unimpeded life as it unfolds. *Helmet Time* is the door opener for serendipity.

Likewise, over planning (AKA over-thinking) is an archenemy of *Helmet Time*, and a symptom of that other



MIND

by Paul H. Smith

dreaded term and antithesis of adventuring—the tourist *mentality*. A tourist is a trip planner. Tourists need to know where they're going and what they'll do *before* they get there. It's a *mindset* that favors prescribed places of interest over creative involvement and interaction, with purposeful (or subconscious) avoidance of anything resembling *serendipity*.

Tourists generally don't experience *Helmet Time*, because they're in full engagement of what they *assume* they *should* be doing rather than what they *could* be doing. To the adventurer, schedules and destinations are viewed more as suggestions or sketches of what one might do rather than dictates. A deceptively simple shift in point of view that far more often than not makes the journey more rewarding than the destination.

Helmet Time displaces such wasted and usually pointless emotions as fear of the unknown, along with a tendency toward inaction when action would usually guarantee far bigger pay-offs. Indeed, disengaging the machine of the *mind* often sets the stage for more meaningful adventures as it opens a wider door, allowing life's experiences to rush in.

Helmet Time is also a gateway into deeper cultural experiences: the more foreign or out of the comfort zone, the better. This is one of the reasons why a radical change in geography, predominant religion, language, hygiene and food forces entrenched behavioral patterns to unlock—another value to being on the road. And why motorcycle overlanding is particularly stimulating.

The irony of all this is that it's so much more fun to break the yoke of the *mind's* "fixed menu" concept of safety and predictability. And mercifully, by exercising *Helmet Time*, one becomes increasingly *less* dependent upon its pat answers and reactionary responses for survival.

Motorcycle overlanding is, after all, a romantic endeavor. We cannot pre-experience what hasn't happened or what we've yet to encounter. After all, the *mind*, like any machine, is incapable of subjective experiences, so why expect otherwise? Indeed, the whole idea behind the romanticism of overlanding is to get out of our comfort zones—and for some to find answers or fill otherwise unknowable voids. It's the adventurous environment that sets the stage for why *Helmet Time* is so transformative to the human spirit and may, in the end, elevate our basic nature. What if our view of *thinking* as the most commonly *believed* method of resolving life's issues and giving it meaning was completely false? What if the *mind* is the enemy hiding in plain sight? It could well be that the answers we seek are hiding 180 degrees from where we've been searching.

Then again, I may just be losing my mind—yeah! **ADV**

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