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a Moto Trip**
From Weekenders
to RTWs

TIGER 900 RALLY PRO



from Switzerland
to South Africa

**2021 Ducati
Multistrada V4**
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Lost in Baja
(Sort of)

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TRIUMPH TIGER

A QUANTUM LEAP FORWARD?

There are tons of reviews out there about *Triumph's* latest addition to their adventure range, the *Tiger 900 Rally Pro*, launched in early 2020. Almost all the reviews rave about a bike that offers the latest electronics and handles very well in general, both on and off road. But...



How is the bike holding up in real life? How comfortable is it when riding for hours and hours, day in and day out? How capable is the *Tiger* in challenging conditions, ranging from the relentless weather of Iceland to the unforgiving, sandy roads of Namibia? And, more importantly, how does the bike handle when ridden by regular, everyday riders? This is my report on an almost 20,000-mile test journey from Switzerland to South Africa. This review focuses solely on first-hand experiences during six months on the road, and how the *Triumph* performed.

/ LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

In February 2020, a time when airports were still busy, I boarded a plane that took me from cold and snowy Zurich, Switzerland to far more comfortable temperatures in Marrakesh, Morocco. *Triumph* had invited the international press for the launch of their all-new *Tiger 900*. Bold claims were made, such as "a quantum leap forward in adventure motorcycle capability."

The *Tiger 900* is not just a revamped *Tiger 800* which is, by itself, a very capable machine. The new challenger is a totally new bike, where not a single bolt from the previous model was recycled. Per *Triumph*, it's "the most capable, agile and dynamic middleweight adventure bike available." After two days of Moroccan sun, it was hard not to like the new *Tiger*. What especially impressed me was seeing some professional motocross and rally riders give this machine a proper run for its money. At the same time, I could not stop thinking of my own adventure, planned for the second half of 2020, when I would be riding straight through Africa, all the way to Cape Town. Initially I had wanted to settle on some old-school *Honda Africa Twins* or something similar, bikes that have a proven track record. But I was starting to believe that, instead, this new *Tiger 900* might be the perfect bike for such an epic trip.

/ FAITH

Fast forward to June 2020. We rode out of the dealership on two brand-new *Tigers*. My wife did not even test ride hers, as hearing me rave about it convinced her the *Tiger 900 Rally Pro* was the right machine for our journey. It certainly was very risky, taking a new machine loaded with electronics to a place where there are only two official *Triumph* dealerships on the entire continent. No risk, no fun. With less than a month to go before departure, we quickly racked up 3,000 miles to get a feel for the bikes.



900 RALLY PRO

LONG-TERM BIKE REVIEW

by Lennart Andreas



Riding the wide-open sandy roads of Namibia.

Even when caught out in a snowstorm, the *Tigers* kept us going.



The only kind of washing the *Tigers* got in six months.



Crashing is part of the game.



/ MAINLAND EUROPE

It was a hot summer day in July 2020 when we left Switzerland. The closed borders due to CV19 forced a change of plans. We were going north first, via the Baltics and Finland to the North Cape in Norway. With the *Tigers* fully loaded, we could easily ride 400–500 miles a day. The higher speeds in Germany were a piece of cake due to the wind protection and deflection offered by the windshield. The twisty countryside roads of the Czech Republic were lots of fun due to the *Tiger's* agility. And the long, straight forest roads in Finland? Hit the cruise control and you'll be just fine. Once we closed in on the North Cape, the heated grips proved their importance. In Norway, we had the first 6,000-mile service and, as expected, other than regular maintenance, the bikes were in perfect condition.

Any modern motorcycle should be capable of tackling these countries with ease from a technical point of view. What really got our attention was how relaxed we were when getting off the bikes every day. No fatigue. No need to drag ourselves onto the *Tigers* the following day, either. It must have been a combination of factors: the quick-shifter, the well-balanced center of gravity, the relatively low weight, the suspension, the kind of roads we encountered and even the fuel mileage we were getting (250 miles per tank, easily). These motorcycles are made to travel. Everything worked. Everything was in the right place. But the real test was still to come.

/ UNFORGIVING

That test came sooner than we expected as we found ourselves on our way to Iceland. When our ferry arrived, we realized that this was a whole different ball game. Iceland was formed by the uncontained force of Mother Nature. Glaciers and volcanoes rule. Toss in the unpredictable weather, and you know it's not going to be your average walk in the park. The central highlands of Iceland are unforgiving. It was here that we were thoroughly tested. Although Iceland offers some fantastic tarmac, the real adventure begins off the beaten path. It did not take long before we found ourselves on the F-roads, accessible only to 4x4 vehicles and off-road capable motorcycles. We knew that the *Tigers* were keen to tackle them, but how reliably?

We crossed the highlands going south on a drizzly Tuesday afternoon, literally trying to escape the oncoming winter in the north. The wind picked up. Temperatures dropped close to freezing. And we had around 120 miles of F-road ahead. Nothing but hours and hours of shaking and vibrating over mud and rocks. We were totally out of our comfort zones. The *Tigers*, however, pulled us through. We had experienced the engine at higher speeds and had a blast,

but at the other side of the odometer the magic really happened. Even at 1,500 rpm in second gear, the engine continued to be utterly smooth and eagerly pulled out of slow turns without the need to shift. We felt in control of the motorcycles and confident to conquer all the terrain ahead.

/ AFRICA

Next, we shipped the motorcycles to Nairobi, Kenya to continue our journey to Cape Town. We knew that Africa was going to ratchet things up a notch so we gave the *Tigers* their 12,000-mile service in London. Again, the bikes were in incredibly good condition and just a week after we dropped them off, we were riding out of *Jomo Kenyatta International Airport*. Things had just gotten *real*—this was the moment we'd been dreaming of.

Sooner than we probably wished, however, we found ourselves on "roads" that consisted of nothing more than red sand and silt so fine that just walking around caused massive dust clouds. Although a spectacular sight, the sand got into every crack and crevice. We were covered in it but did not have an opportunity to wash the bikes before continuing on. However, it didn't seem to hurt the *Tigers* one bit.

One of the biggest challenges was riding up the infamous mountain road from Khondowe to Livingstonia, Malawi. It's just over six miles long, but steep inclines, tight hairpin bends, and large ruts and rocks made life difficult. The *Tiger* showcased its abilities here and the engine and the

suspension stole the show. Slowly but steadily, we climbed higher and the *Triumphs* were unstoppable, absorbing all the big impacts with great ease. The smooth throttle control and low rpms of the *Offroad Mode* delivered beyond our expectations.

/ CRASH PROTECTION

We did put the *Triumphs* on their sides a couple of times. No nasty crashes, just silly drops most of the time. We did not carry many spares but did have extra front brake and clutch levers. We never needed them, as the crash bars did their job, and the bikes absorbed the impacts without serious damage. It needs to be said that we were not riding at extremely high speeds, nor were we pushing the bikes to their limits, because we don't have those skills.

/ CAPE TOWN

We made it to Cape Town after six months through enormous amounts of dust, days of abuse along corrugated roads, sandstorms, and temps of 110°F in the scorching, non-stop sun. Yet, the motorcycles easily passed the next service inspection in Cape Town. The *Tigers* were in exceptionally good shape, despite not being maintained other than lubing along our route. The *Rally Pro* truly exceeded our expectations.

Iceland provides an environment where the *Tiger* feels perfectly at home.



/ TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?

Jam packed with electronics and sensors, our biggest fear was a mechanical breakdown, as our mechanical knowledge was close to zero. But we worried for nothing, as the bikes withstood the test with flying colors. Many of the technical and electronic options we didn't use or need, however. *GoPro* connectivity, for example, worked great and I loved it on a test ride back home, but on the road, I had no time to use it and it was easier to just hit the helmet-mounted button on the *GoPro* itself. And the dedicated and secure phone-charging storage space is a great marketing tool, but how practical is it when you have luggage mounted on the passenger seat?

Moving away from electronics, the skid plate could have been more solid. It did get the job done, but just for peace of mind it could have been more reinforced, as it did take some big hits and was cause for concern along the way. Nothing happened but that might have been our good luck.

The only issue we had, besides two flat tires, was that we had to bleed the rear brakes of one of the bikes at some point. And we later found out that this was likely related to the high-altitude pressure changes when the bike was flown to Africa. With 4G cell phone coverage and the help of *WhatsApp* voice messages from our trusted mechanics back home, we even got that done in no time.

The *Tigers* looking almost new, even at the end of their 20,000-mile journey!

/ LONG STORY SHORT

For us, the *Tiger 900 Rally Pro* enabled us to fulfill our dreams. It took us safely through every situation encountered all the way to Cape Town and did so with impeccable reliability and swift agility while maintaining a high level of comfort. The motorcycles were standard and straight out of the box, other than a few OEM accessories. No need to make any modifications, no need to make any adjustments. Just get on and ride—around the world! The *Tiger 900 Rally Pro* can do it. Can you? **ADV**



Lennart Andreas hails from Switzerland and has ridden all types of bikes since 2008. Lennart and wife, **Maia**, visited Iceland as part of a six-month journey that took them from their home to Cape Town in 2020. Instagram: [lennart.andreas](#) | [maias_travels](#) | Website: [LennartAndreas.com](#)

