

# “My adventure of a lifetime”

## 5,000 miles, across 12 countries in 29 days

By Joy Harris

Her children were grown up and Viv Goddard was looking for a new challenge. Little did she know that it would take her on adventures she'd never dreamed of. Viv (55), from Buxton, near Norwich, had often ridden pillion on her husband Bob's 1000cc motorbike and loved the feeling of freedom on the open road. Bob (56), a veteran motorcycle journalist, was a safe pair of hands, so it wasn't until she was 45 that Viv decided to take the test herself. She received her first big bike, a powerful 650cc machine, as a birthday gift from Bob in 2001.

Jokingly styling themselves the Norfolk version of Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman in *The Long Way Round*, Viv joined Bob as they roared around the flat Fen roads near their home – dreaming of the big wide world out there, waiting to be explored.

As Viv says: “When the children leave, you can feel a bit sorry for yourself. But I was determined to find the new person in me. Biking was a way of doing that.”

When Bob suggested their first great adventure – three months and 11,000 miles biking off-road around the old gold miners' routes of New Zealand – she had her helmet and leathers ready in a flash. “I certainly have an adventurous streak, although I leave the planning and navigation

When she learned to ride a motorbike at 45 little did Viv Goddard realise how it would completely transform her life

to Bob,” she says. “But I'm definitely up for these trips just as much as he is.”

When the New Zealand trip went well, it was time to plan a tougher challenge. Viv and Bob support a child in Malawi through EveryChild, which helps children and their communities, and wanted to organise a trip to raise money for the charity. “We had visited our sponsored child and were really impressed with the work EveryChild does,” said Viv. “They run projects lasting several years and everything is sustainable after they move on.”

The trip, which took place in 2005, took them to 12 countries and across 16 borders to the Bulgarian coastline in Eastern Europe. But little did Viv and Bob realise just how arduous their journey would become, as they were forced to ride through ferocious storms and floods en route. It was almost a challenge too far. But it was too late – they had EveryChild's support and

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could not go back on a promise. “We underestimated just how hard the trip would be,” admits Viv “The farther east we went, the more the roads deteriorated – as did the standard of driving. And then in Bucharest in Romania, we hit the mother of all storms.”

It was the start of a nightmare. Viv and Bob had to bump over raised tramlines in the road and clung on grimly as roads and bridges were washed away. They hit yawning chasms filled with swirling brown storm water, the result of roadworks which had been abandoned because of the weather. Viv admits she was terrified and Bob blamed himself for putting her through the ordeal. They later heard that 20 people had been killed in the area.

She wrote ever more desperately in her journal: “It's like a bad dream, with every bad thing you can imagine happening at once. No order, no signs, not enough eyes to see in all directions at once. Just go... Great caverns of water to ride through... Change lanes again and again. Still no signs. We are lost. God help us.”

Eventually, the couple negotiated their way out of the danger zone, but there were more



Viv, geared up for adventure and below with husband Bob in Malawi with the family they help to support

heart-stopping adventures to come – along with spectacular scenery and more lighthearted tales, such as the night they stayed inadvertently in a brothel!

Needless to say, Bob and Viv's holiday pictures are unlike most others, but they are a huge source of pride to friends and family, including their children, David (36), Helen (34) and Michael (27).



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“They always tell us to drive carefully – it's real role reversal,” laughs Viv.

On the other hand, their grandchildren, Annabel (9) and James (5), think they have the coolest grandparents on the planet when Viv and Bob roar up to their home in Poole, Dorset.

“Biking gives me an unbelievable buzz. It's the best thing ever and there's no feeling like the freedom of being able to just go. Even on our ordinary holidays – we have a cottage in Cyprus – we have access to parts of the island that other people never see.”

Bob is full of admiration for his intrepid co-rider. “I've been riding for 40 years, but some of the things we encountered on that Eastern European trip were almost beyond me. Viv was a complete heroine to do it. She really is my wonder woman.”

You can read about the couple's adventure in Bob's new book *Beyond Bucharest* (Timbuktu Publishing, £9.95). It's available from several Norfolk bookshops or by mail order for £10 including P&P. Write to Timbuktu Publishing, Stables Bungalow, 5 Mill Reach, Buxton, Norwich NR10 5EJ or visit [www.timbuktu-publishing.co.uk](http://www.timbuktu-publishing.co.uk)

For more details about EveryChild, which will receive royalties from every copy of *Beyond Bucharest* sold, ring 0207 749 2468 or visit [www.everychild.org.uk](http://www.everychild.org.uk)