

Red Tape & White Knuckles by Lois Pryce

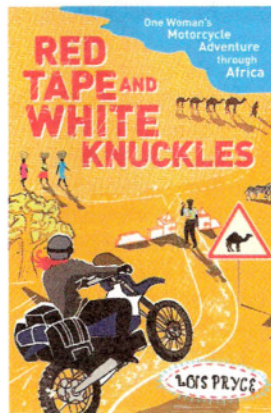


review by Moshe K. Levy

THEY DON'T CALL Lois Pryce the "Queen of Small Displacement Touring" for nothing. Pryce's 20,000-mile solo trek from Anchorage, AK to Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego in 2003 inspired her riveting first book, *Lois On The Loose*. But the Americas were just the beginning for this audacious English-woman. In her latest tome, *Red Tape and White Knuckles*, Lois Pryce attempts to tackle some of the world's most hostile environments, alone once again, aboard a tiny Yamaha XT225 Serow trail bike. And as before, there is no backup crew, no cell phone, no GPS, and none of the other fancy trappings typically utilized to mitigate risk of such dangerous journeys. This woman is either seriously masochistic, or has the intestinal fortitude of a lioness! Regardless, the result is a very compelling tale.

The story of the trip begins on October 14, 2006, as Pryce departs her hometown of London with the ultimate goal of traversing the entirety of Africa to its southernmost point in Cape Town. But unlike most of her moto-adventuring brethren, Pryce's route does not cut a wide swath around some of the world's most notorious hotspots of crime and raging civil conflicts. Instead, she proceeded to travel not just through Tunisia, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Gabon—but straight into the Congo Basin itself (rape capital of the world) and war-ravaged Angola—before exploring Namibia, and finally finishing in South Africa.

While most would judge such an itinerary as simply suicidal—especially for a lone scarlet-haired, fair-skinned female motorcyclist—Pryce approaches the formidable challenge with a healthy dose of realism and mountains of indomitable spirit. She describes her surroundings in vivid detail, from the euphoric freedom of blasting flat-out through the Sahara desert to the devastating



humanitarian effects of the 27-year civil war in Angola. Throughout the narrative, strangers appear almost as if by divine intervention to help Lois out of various hairy predicaments, while others attempt to quash her progress entirely.

Naturally, the riding conditions she encounters are not what motorcyclists are used to in more industrialized countries. In Tunisia she writes, "I was narrowly missed by a moped which was overtaking a car, which was overtaking a truck, which itself had started the whole overtaking furor by trying to get around a horse and cart. A bus coming the other

way was forced off the road onto the verge, but it was also being overtaken by a beat-up yellow taxi which refused to get out of the way." This type of urban scenario was quite common, and tempered by tedious inching through rained-soaked gullies in the jungle, hundreds of miles from civilization.

There are more than a few moments where, without giving away the details, Pryce finds her personal safety at tremendous risk. But a combination of luck and perseverance triumphs when Lois literally coasts into Cape Town after four months and 10,000 grueling miles on the road.

Though not as biting funny or fast-paced as *Lois On The Loose*, *Red Tape And White Knuckles* is certainly inspirational, entertaining, and a worthy addition to any moto-adventurer's library. Alas, the US printing will likely only have black and white photos, so color-loving readers are urged to either buy the UK version or to visit the picture galleries at Lois' web site, www.loisontheloose.com