

Pass It On®... The Road to Appreciation

Mick is a big man with long hair and beard that would place him naturally onstage with the Grateful Dead. Today he is looking at motorcycles, the kind that move easily from asphalt to dirt to unmarked desert. Broad stretches of desert are like moonscapes, uninhabited with long horizons and lit up at night by the galaxy. There's nothing like it if you want to ponder your own insignificance in the universe and find meaning in the process.

Turns out alone time in the wilderness is of great value to our mental and emotional wellbeing. Einstein took long walks in nature and received some of his most profound inspiration there. Being alone with nature affords self-reflection and leads to a renewal and an appreciation for life itself. According to [The Conversation](#), a nonprofit organization, "alone time creates a contrasting experience to normal living that enriches people mentally, physically and emotionally...people become more attuned to the important matters in their lives."

Today the desert still attracts seekers of peace, solitude and adventure. Mick is one of them. "I put in at Yuma," he says, as if he is launching into the ocean. "Then head to Mexicali on pavement. I get a good meal and the rest of the ride is off-road, all the way to Cabo." It's a trip he's been doing a few times a year for more than a decade, a trip that gets him away from a complicated life he won't talk about. Some feelings can't be shared with others; betrayal is deep and sometimes the only way to find peace is to ride into the infinite in order to define our own boundaries while letting the past dissipate behind us in the exhaust of a fast machine.

"Solitary reflection enhances recognition and appreciation of key personal relationships, encourages reorganization of life priorities," The experts at The Conversation found. For Mick, he didn't need the formal guidance, only a place where he could be alone in a landscape that unfolded all around him with the rising of the sun. For most of us, a solitary walk in nature for a day does wonders.

Mick zigzags his way South, sometimes riding on the hard packed sand of the beach and sometimes

bouncing up rocky alluvial steppes or hitting top speeds on the flats. For rest, there is the shade of the Elephant Cactus; it grows like a hand out of the desert floor, the fingers reaching above 50 feet. One hard rainstorm and the cactus soaks up enough water to sustain itself for years of aridity, kind of like a week in the desert fills up your senses for the rest of the year.

Bending to inspect the clearance on the new bike, he remembers something an older woman at a hacienda once told him: "Where the road is rough, only the good people come." And they return renewed, appreciative of what secrets nature unfolded in their souls.

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