

Using a BMW GS to follow the trail of the Spanish pioneers

Hollywood movies have long perpetuated the legend of the American Wild West, conquered by the westward advance of the English colonial settlers and stagecoach pioneers with their Stetson hats and Colt pistols. However, the first expeditions in North America were accomplished by intrepid Spaniards long before the arrival of The Mayflower. BMW GS-riding explorer Miquel Silvestre is currently crossing the USA from coast to coast on the Old Spanish Trail, following in the footsteps of the earliest Spanish globetrotters...



His journey started in Saint Augustine, Florida, the first city founded in North America, by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. Miquel and his 2008 BMW GS will travel across the country, following the routes taken by Hernando de Soto, Cabeza de Vaca, Juan Bautista de Anza and Vázquez de Coronado in their search for the Seven Cities of Gold of Cibola and Quivira.

The origin of the myth of the Seven Cities of Gold dates back to the eighth century with the Muslim conquest of the Spanish city of Merida. Seven bishops fled Merida with the sacred relics, each of them believed to have founded a wealthy city in America. That is how the legend began about these seven rich cities that the Spanish explorers were so eager to find.



Miquel's itinerary will take him across the southern United States from coast to coast by secondary roads and dirt tracks, culminating in San Francisco, itself discovered by the Catalonian Gaspar de Portola in the eighteenth century. The plan is to document the entire journey and show the United States from a Hispanic perspective, looking for the official recognition of the early Spanish explorers in national parks, streets and statues.



This is the latest exciting journey for the famed travel writer who has already toured over 90 countries by motorcycle. Within the past year he has travelled from Madrid to Uzbekistan and back on the 'Forgotten Explorers' route, following the tracks of fifteenth century pioneer Rui González de Clavijo. He also recently crossed the Sahara Desert on a 1965 BMW R 50, looking for Spanish colonial memories in North Africa.



This latest ambitious journey will be documented from start to finish and can be followed online right now, as Miquel explains.

"Because the first explorers of the USA from Florida to California were Spaniards, I am pleased to take on the challenge of this coast to coast ride from Saint Agustin

to San Francisco, following the steps of the early travellers and their trails that have now become part of USA history. The so-called 'Old Spanish Trail' crosses the USA from coast to coast in a long itinerary full of colour, beautiful scenery and Spanish history.

“My aim is to record a documentary for the Spanish national TV and BMW Motorrad’s YouTube channel, and we also want to promote this journey for Spaniards and Hispanic BMW riders as a touristic alternative to Route 66. As a BMW Motorrad Spain ambassador I would also like to make some presentations at USA BMW dealerships along the way if possible.”



Miquel’s web page (www.miquelsilvestre.com) will cover this journey live and direct, with weekly videos updated. The whole trip will also be turned into a television documentary to be transmitted over 12 episodes.



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