

# EnduRoMania: Three decades of enduro tourism

A report by Sergio Morariu

## Part 1 - The idea of EnduRoMania was born in Peru

My fascinating journey through the Peruvian desert began five decades ago, an expedition into a world that most Europeans still only know from books and films. I arrived in Peru in 1973 as a young water resources management engineer and systems analyst and soon found myself in the middle of this unique desert landscape, which captivated me from the very beginning.



Professional activity in Peru

For me, the desert was not just a geographical phenomenon, but a passion that would not let me go. I longed to meet extraordinary people who had already explored this endless desert as experienced enduro riders. My desire to befriend these pioneers of desert adventure came true and created a bond that still exists today.

The pictures from that time are unforgettable, showing how the enduro friends got on their enduro motorcycles to conquer the desert. Together with other enduro friends, we founded the "Moto-Cross-Country del Peru" club and took every opportunity to explore the desert. We set off from petrol stations on the Carretera Panamericana North or South and discovered new areas almost every time.



**Enduro hiking in Peru at the end of the 70s**

Enduro riding enabled us to traverse rough terrain at high speed and experience breathtaking nature. Our routes were so varied that we rarely rode the same route twice. Our thirst for adventure drove us on and on, and the memories of these tours are still vivid today.

The desert tours took us along sandy tracks to rest areas used by truck drivers to transport goods along the Pacific coast. Lunch breaks with Peruvian delicacies were an integral part of these adventures. Sometimes we went on multi-day tours to remote desert areas and spent the night in tents in the open air. We even organized rallies along the lines of the Baja California Rally, which we named Baja Paracas.



**Enduro hiking and Inca rally in the 80s in Peru**

We also ventured onto unpaved roads that even reached altitudes of over 5,000 meters above sea level, into the majestic Andes, where snow-capped peaks and imposing glaciers dominated the landscape. These excursions made a fascinating change from our desert adventures and showed us a completely different side of Peru.



**Enduro hiking in the Altiplano Peruano region**

It is also worth noting that, due to my enthusiasm for this innovative form of enduro tourism, I sensed an opportunity to combine it with the spirit of economic development typical of Germany's international cooperation. This idea was realized by including our enduro tours in Peru in the Fly & Ride offer of the travel agency Schmalz in Altenkirchen, which were carried out by our group with DR400R motorcycles. The young and talented journalist Reiner Nietschke took over the journalistic documentation of this innovative overseas enduro tourism offer in 1981.



**Photographic recordings by the journalist Reiner Nietschke in 1981**

The first contact of our club "Moto-Cross-Country del Peru" with an international enduro event of the professional class was the Inkas Rally 1986, which was organized by the Italian Franco Acerbis and also supported by our club. Many members of our club took part in this and the following Inkas Rallyes. The success of the 2018, 2019 and 2020 Dakar Rally, in which Peru was an important part of the route, definitively confirmed Peru's exceptional qualities for enduro racing.

After returning to Europe in 1988, I kept in touch with Peru and continued to go on desert tours with my Peruvian friends. The longing for the spectacular desert landscapes and the shared adventures kept me coming back to experience the beauty and challenge of the Peruvian deserts.



**Enduro hiking in the 90s in Peru**

Over time, however, the nature of enduro riding changed. Modern SxS buggies conquered the scene. These all-terrain vehicles with over 100 hp and space for driver and passenger offered a comfortable and less strenuous way to explore the desert. This change reflected the progress and development in off-road sport.

My last trip to Peru took me to the so-called Asia Desert, about 100 km south of Lima, where I was able to cover breathtaking distances with my friends through a landscape of sand dunes, steep hills and with a view of the blue ocean. Once again, I was impressed by the diversity of the surroundings and the challenges in the dunes gave me an adrenaline rush.



**My old Pruanian enduro friends have switched to Buggy SxS without exception**

Most of the participants drove the powerful SxS Buggys off-road vehicles, which proved to be reliable companions for overcoming the challenges of the desert. These modern off-road vehicles ensured that we did not tire so quickly and were able to move safely through the rough terrain.

After my return to Germany in 1988, I was frustrated by the poor prospects of being able to pursue my enduro hobby and even decided not to buy an enduro. Then came the transition from communism to a free market economy in Eastern Europe and I took a job in the International German Cooperation with Romania, where circumstances motivated me to buy a Suzuki DR400R in 1993 and I had the opportunity to make an important contribution to building and maintaining an enduro hiking paradise in my old homeland. The 30-year development of EnduRoMania will be the subject of the second part of my love affair with enduro touring described below.

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## Part 2 - EnduRoMania - An exciting journey through the Romanian mountains

The EnduRoMania project, a cooperation with the Romanian Motorcycle Federation (FRM), has shaped enduro tourism for almost 30 years. Romania's unique terrain conditions and tourism opportunities have quickly made the country a hotspot for enduro enthusiasts in Europe. Today, Romania hosts numerous enduro competitions, European and World Championships as well as the famous RedBull Romaniacs in Sibiu. What started as a local initiative has developed into an internationally recognized event that not only promotes the passion for enduro, but also supports tourism and showcases Romania's unique nature and hospitality.



Pure nature - an advantage of Romania

As the project manager of a German cooperation project, I recognized the excellent conditions for enduro hiking in southwest Romania and began to explore the Banat mountain landscape in South West Romania on my own DR350R.

The EnduRoMania project arose from the idea of using enduro tourism as an instrument for economic development in rural areas. With the support of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, EnduRoMania was launched in 1995, an event that was to redefine the boundaries of motorsport tourism. The result was a tourist rally in which the focus was on navigation. A kind of rally and scavenger hunt through a rural area covering several thousand square kilometers, which represented a unique challenge for the participants.



**Friendly people**

The planning and implementation of the project began at the level of the district administrations and was later delegated to the EnduRoMania Foundation, a non-profit organization established specifically for this purpose.



**Lack of infrastructure**

EnduRoMania was publicized via the same trade press that Reiner Nietschke used to report on our Peruvian enduro experience in the 1980s and others, such as the Enduro magazine founded by Norbert Bauer, which has since been merged with major German magazine MotorradABENTEUER. The integration of the Internet as a marketing tool proved to be groundbreaking, and the EnduRoMania website, which has been online since 1996, has been instrumental in the development of the project. Numerous contributions from participants can be found on websites and social media. EnduRoMania has been included in the calendars of the international motorcycle governing bodies (FIM and UEM) from the very beginning and was even represented on the UEM Tourism Commission.



**Ideal for enduro hiking**

The number of participants increased from year to year and two events in 1995 became up to nine EnduRoMania Classic events per year over the course of time. The EnduRoMania Classic takes place on fixed dates and consists of 5 active driving days, specific regulations, an information meeting, a classification and an award ceremony on site. The EnduRoMania Anytime allows participants to freely determine their participation, time and duration, while the Long Distance option is comparable to the Classic, but has been specially developed for the touring enduro faction. All EnduRoMania variants have the same documentation and official accreditation letters.



**Enduro adventure**

The predominantly German-speaking participants come from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and various European countries. The variety of vehicles, from mountain bikes to off-road trucks, is reflected in the broad participant base. On the initiative of the legendary Peter Römer (85), there were even exclusive enduro sidecar teams at the start for several years. Over time, the brand landscape has changed and KTM Enduro bikes have gained a significant presence. The introduction of the Buggy SxS in 2009 not only expanded the range of vehicles, but also enriched the sporty riding experience.



**Buggy SxS & Enduros with sidecars**

Over the years, technology has evolved and navigation has switched from paper charts to GPS. The number of control points increased from 20 to almost 300, and navigation was no longer manual but automatic.



Navigation

The popularity of EnduRoMania is impressively confirmed by the numerous repeat visitors. Participants who gained their first experience back in the 1990s are still active today. Quite a few of them took part for the first time as youngsters and are now still enthusiastic participants together with their offspring. The age range of the EnduRoManiacs extends from very young participants to those over 70, which shows that this event is very popular across all generations.



**Hard Enduro**



The social component of EnduRoMania takes center stage. Mixed teams of enduro, off-road vehicle or SxS buggy drivers are permitted and encourage a varied distribution of tasks. The field of participants ranges from enduro beginners to experienced enduro rally experts. EnduRoMania has created a partnership platform that has led to long-standing sporting friendships throughout Europe. The participants form mixed teams and contribute to the diversity and social dynamics of the event. The integration of female athletes and the support of initiatives such as Hamburg based Tina Meyer's Dirt Girls contribute to the inclusive nature of the event. Tina Meyer participated several times at the Southamrican Dakar, RedBullRomaniacs in Sibiu and several othe major enduro rallies.



**Dirt Girls Team of Tina Meyer from Hamburg**

It is almost anecdotal that this event has not only resulted in breathtaking off-road experiences, but also in lasting German-Romanian marriages and the founding of companies in Romania by international EnduRoMania participants. A special 'child' of EnduRoMania is the now 17-year-old Christina Palmer. Christina is a two-time winner of the British Girls National Championship.



**Christina Palmer - EnduRoMania Junior and British Champion**

EnduRoMania has also proved particularly successful in integrating wheelchair-bound athletes with limited mobility. Thanks to the four-wheeled off-road vehicles, an area has been opened up for these athletes in which their disability can be overcome in many cases. In 1996, for example, we had the first participant of this kind at EnduRoMania, Ottmar Königsdorfer, a former top European specialist in the sidecar motocross discipline, who was confined to a wheelchair after a sports accident. With his Yamaha Warrior quad bike, this exceptional athlete was no different from the other top participants. The number of these athletes has grown over time, with groups of up to 12 such participants, such as the group from the Czech Republic founded by Stanislav Hegedus, a former top enduro rally rider who was injured in an international competition and is now confined to a wheelchair.



**Enduro athletes with limited mobility**

The economic development of the region was promoted by the creation of dozens of guesthouses. The EnduRoMania Foundation, which initially focused on organizing events, later decided to plan and build an enduro tourism infrastructure. This process took several years and led to the creation of the EnduRoMania Center in Brebu Nou. The EnduRoMania headquarters in Brebu Nou, which was inaugurated in 2007, functions as a central location for enduro sports and offers accommodation, catering and services.



**EnduRoMania Hospitality**

The long-standing cooperation with our partner organization Nomud Adventures has led to not only the implementation of the Fly and Ride concept for international participants, but also to a comprehensive local motorcycle service, motorcycle rental and Enduro training joint venture.



**Fly and Ride offer from NoMud Adventures**

EnduRoMania has also specialized in special events, including ContiRoMania incentive events and enduro training sessions with experts such as Graham Jarvis. In Brebu Nou, non-motorized sports events have even been organized, ranging from survival training and team building to street art camps and photography workshops.



**Enduro training with experts like Graham Jarvis**

Between 2004 and 2011, the so-called ContiRoMania Trophy events were held as part of EnduRoMania in Brebu Nou after the Hanover-based company Continental built a tire plant in Timișoara.



**ContiRoMania Trophy Incentive Events**

EnduRoMania's success story spans over three decades and has not only created an exceptional enduro event, but has also contributed to Romania's tourism development. By integrating technology, innovation and a wide range of activities, EnduRoMania has become a comprehensive platform for adventure, friendship and exploration of Romania's stunning landscapes.



### **EnduRoMania International Community**

\*The photos used here come also from the numerous participants of the EnduRoMania community who generously provided them for the documentation of the event.

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## Supplementary picture gallery

### Enduro for Fun



# Buggy SxS at EnduRoMania



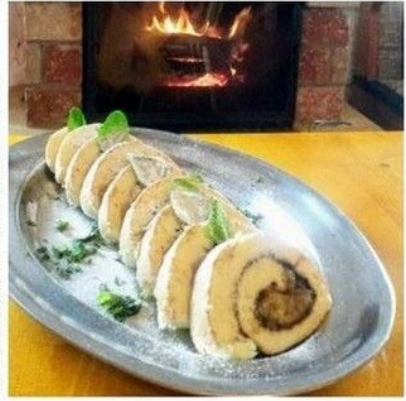
## Enduro Training with Graham Jarvis 2



# Relaxation



# Food @ EnduRoMania



# Friendship



# Meet and greet



# Control points





# Planning



# Touring enduros



# Maintenance



# Award ceremony



# EnduRoMania Support Team



# EnduRoMania Teamwork



**EnduRoMania digital art by Paul Salzberger – Telaviv**

