

TRAVEL&TOURISM

Out Of Nigeria: Riding 'Round' The World On Motorcycle



Toyin

Toyin Adebola and Opeyemi Fodeke are two Nigerian riders who are about to do the unthinkable in this clime – ride round the world on Bike. And according to them, the over 40,000km journey, which they say is inspired by adventures they have seen elsewhere, holds many benefits for the nation in terms of how it would rub-off on her global image, its tourism industry and corporate Nigeria.

By Olawunmi Ojo

IN Europe and some parts of Asia, it is not uncommon to find people taking adventure or risks for reasons otherwise considered in this clime as vain. And often than not, when such adventures are taken, they are taken primarily for discovery and fun. Of course, several other benefits may then follow as spin-offs.

The story of three couples who all resigned their jobs, got their entitlements and other proceeds, used them to arrange logistics and came on a discovery and fun trip of Africa by road in 2006, comes to mind.

But such trips or ventures are not happenstances; they occur regularly. It is the reason you find an old man in his 70s go to the Dakar Rally. It is the reason an old man recently crossed the Pacific Ocean alone in a kayak, with Rolex, Red Bull and some other top brands all to follow him on the dare-devil trip. It is also the reason some guys recently jumped down from the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Rumble in the jungle, Long way round, Race to Dakar and other solo acts are no feats often contemplated by Africans or Nigerians.

But all that is about to change. The norm is now being challenged. In an adventure, titled, 'Out Of Nigeria', two Nigerians, Toyin Adebola, and Yemi Fodeke, who are members of The Eagles Motorcycle Club, are set to ride round the world on their motorcycles. Adebola is the Managing Director, Lakeside Energy Limited and GalaxyFrontier Energy & Gas Limited, while Fodeke, an Architect, is the Managing Director, Retrofit Projects Solutions Limited. The trip would see them go by road from Nigeria to Europe through North America and back to Nigeria.

The Eagles Motorcycle Club is a Lagos-based exclusive club of professionals and seasoned

entrepreneurs who have distinguished themselves in their areas of specialization and love riding motorcycles.

'Out of Nigeria' would be an unscripted, 24-hour adventure across the globe. The expedition is planned to start in Nigeria and run through West and North Africa, Europe, North America, back to West Africa and back to Nigeria. According to the club, "the riders will tour the world, through the eyes of regular Africans (Nigerians in particular) and adventure lovers across the world."

The route plan for the expedition would cover 17 countries – Nigeria, Benin Republic, Togo, Ghana, Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco, (ferry ride) Spain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Belarus, Russia, (flight) Alaska, Canada (terminate in Halifax), (flight) Ghana (or Togo), and Benin Republic and back into Nigeria.

According to Adebola, "There are two flights in-between because when we get to the tip of Russia, we have to take a flight from the last major city which is Magadan into Alaska (almost at the north pole). From Alaska, we would ride to Halifax from where we would take another flight to Accra. From Accra, we would then ride back to Lagos. It is about a 40,000km journey."

But what could have got the duo thinking of this adventure? Adebola's co-rider on the trip, Fodeke says, "For us, in the last six to eight months, we have been longing for more than the norm; something more than just riding from your house to the office or about town."

Adebola further explains: "We are a bunch of professionals who just love motorcycling. That boiled over into wanting to take motorcycling, adventure, and adventure documenting to another level. Nigerians are not known to be adventurers; the Africans who are adventurous are nomads or people who for some reasons are journalists."

"So, what we intend to do is unique. We are stretching the limit. We want to do something that would serve as image-laundering for our country. 90 per cent of information that goes out on Nigeria is negative. Very few Europeans really know about Nigeria or see us as people. We are trying to let people understand that Nigeria is not what they think it is. At the same time, it is an adventure for us that we want to document; we want to show the world from the eyes of Black Africans and indeed, Nigerians."

"Nobody has done what we are trying to do; that is properly documenting it such that they are creating a constant following online for people to see that we are riding from here to here and then follow us. We have engaged a company in the United Kingdom, called Tanglewood Productions. It is one of the best film companies in the United Kingdom. They have done adventure filming; they do filming for a lot of corporate bodies."

"No black Africans have done round-the-world motorcycle rides in documented history. No black Africans have done adventures that are packaged, documented professionally and posted online for a worldwide following. "It will be posted on social media pages including YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and the like for the entire duration of the ride, finding and exciting digital audiences all over the world and creating that needed buzz around what a group of Nigerians are doing on the road. This would be the first progressive adventure documentation ever, and it will be done by Nigerian motorcycle riders."

Adventures like this are expensive. And the two riders are not oblivious of that. The trip, according to them, is going to cost close to N100 million. This is sure not cheap.

But being successful entrepreneurs in their rights, they have and are still committing huge resources and sums of money to arrange logistics. They are however also courting sponsors to support the expedition. "We are already talking to some brands. But we are still looking for sponsors to key into this and support us," Adebola says.

He speaks further on their efforts and why they think corporate Nigeria and brands ought to key into their kind of adventure. "This is not an individual thing; it is a club thing. We are using the platform of our club – the Eagle Motorcycle Club. We call ourselves the Eagle Riders. This adventure is all inspired by adventures we have seen others do and which exploded into so many other bigger things. So what we want to put out is something compelling that would show investors that these guys are serious and I want to put my money on them."

Apart from the fun around it and the image-laundering their expedition may bring the nation, Adebola and Fodeke are also confident that this ride would create platforms that could help push Nigerian brands into the world glare.

They believe this would give global visibility in a way never done before and that it would create strong emotional appeal within Nigeria, by Nigerians worldwide, and by a global community. This is because the bikes and riders on the trip will wear sponsors logos and a footnote will be streamed that advertises sponsors.

"For sometime, we have been looking at the corporate world in Nigeria, and the platforms that brands are using to advertise and market their products and campaigns. We personally feel that there is saturation; nothing new. It is the same old thing – music and concerts. It is even getting worse these days because when you go to concerts, you only get to see miming and not performances. It is almost as if we have come to a stage where we settle for mediocrity, apart from Nigerian Breweries that does Ultimate Search, which is not even an original idea."

"We feel there are no exiting platforms for corporate brands to market and actually showcase ideologies that they represent – like be adventurous, be different, be bold, explore, newness. So, we are trying to create platforms through which brands can take advantage of something new, bold and challenging. There is no black African that has done what we are trying to do, talk-less of a Nigerian. We are planning to cover about 40,000 km withing two and half months. We are planning to have

one of the best film companies in the world document it and actually carry a followership along for the entire process. If that is not a good branding opportunity for any serious organisation, then what is it? This would be an opportunity. This would be one event that is new, bold and crazy for organisations to tap into."

Have we seen motorcycle stunts in Nigeria; guys who when they are done, your jaws would drop. Have we brought a circus to Nigeria? Have we done a real motorcycle race that actually galvanised the nation? Have we brought adventures to this country that challenged people? When last did we have the wow! factor in Nigeria? When last did any Nigerian do something that Nigerians and the rest of the world would say – wow! That is what we are trying to achieve with 'Out of Nigeria'."

In addition, and quite naturally, the media and online impact would be immense with significant rub-off on country's image and sponsors, plus a global audience that can't wait for a sequel. This much, Fodeke admits: "By doing something different, we hope there would be a lot of spin-offs from our ride. We have already done a number of charity projects but we believe taking this ride would be a big step. We need the country and hope the country also needs some people who would take our image beyond politics, sports, tribal issues and just explore to experience a change."

With logistics and other planning in top gear, the expedition is set to take off in January. And according to the duo, this is only one of several initiatives they are bent on embarking on. "Take for instance, there is no Nigerian that has participated at the Dakar Rally. It has never been done. So, after this, we are going to the Dakar Rally. We are both resolved to do that. And, I tell you, if we can take Nigerian brands to the Dakar Rally, it would be the beginning of greater exploits."

"Recently, an old man crossed the Pacific alone in a kayak. And Rolex, Red Bull and some other top brands were all on him; they all wanted to be part of such adventure. Some guys recently jumped down from the Burj Khalifa; there were brands that supported that jump and you can only imagine the global attention it brought them. So, in Nigeria, what are we doing apart from sponsoring people to mime songs? Part of what this adventure would do is to create an avenue for brands to support extraordinary events that are not common around here. This is our ultimate objective. So, apart from from all the bad Press Nigeria is getting, we want to show that Nigerians are adventurous people, natural and resilient people; that we are good and friendly and are born with the 'can-do-it' spirit."

