

WHEN I WAS A KID, I HAD THREE POSTERS IN MY ROOM. ONE, ON THE CEILING, WAS FARRAH FAWCETT-MAJORS IN A RED BATHING SUIT.

The second was of Barry Sheene standing on the podium with a fag in one hand and a bottle of champagne in the other, a wreath around his neck, and two gorgeous girls on either side (which you knew he was about to go and fuck). The third was *Easy Rider*; Dennis Hopper sitting side by side with Peter Fonda on his "Captain America" Harley, the epitome of cool – the shades, the hair, the bike, the eyes dead ahead.

The film managed to capture that love of riding for riding's sake, something I've understood since my first time on a bike at the age of seven. I was riding a little monkey bike and heading straight for this barbed wire fence, when my dad reached out, grabbed my hair and pulled me clean off, leaving the bike to smash straight into the fence on its own. I was hooked.

You can't really explain the attraction, it just becomes something you do, and soon you do whatever it takes to go and do it. Not surprisingly then, when *Esquire* asked me if I wanted to ride the annual Legend of the Motorcycle along the Pacific Coast Highway from LA, through the rolling hills of California, with a crew of fellow bike fanatics on some of the world's greatest bikes – Triumphs, Ducatis, MVs – it didn't take me long to reply. Oh, and apparently Peter Fonda would be joining us as well.

We left LA on Highway 1, starting downtown before heading through the tunnel that pops you out right by the beach, onto the Pacific Coast Highway and up past Malibu. I used to live in Malibu Colony as a kid, where Larry Hagman and all the big stars had houses, and some still do. As we drove past the pier, it got me thinking about the time my dad [film director John Boorman] had been out drinking with Lee Marvin, who, despite being shit-faced was determined to drive home. Dad wrestled the keys from him and managed to lock him out of the car, but Marvin just climbed onto the roof and refused to get down. Dad thought, "Fuck it – it's late, it's only a mile home, let him get on with it". So they drove down the Pacific Coast Highway, until a motorcycle cop pulled them over. Dad rolled down the car window wondering how he was going to explain himself, while Marvin just carried on shouting. When he got to dad's car the cop asked: "Sir, do you realise you >

## AMERICAN ODYSSEY

WORDS BY GUYAN MITRA

It's 3,000 miles to San Fran, you've got a full tank of gas, half a pack of cigarettes and you're wearing sunglasses. Hit it...



### Louisville

Kentucky may not instantly spring to mind as a Mecca for modern art, but the recently opened 21c Museum Hotel in Louisville is well worth a detour. It claims – we'd say rightly – to be the first of its kind: a combination of 91-room design hotel and spa, and 9,000sq ft gallery solely showcasing 21st century art. And you thought this place only did fried chicken.

**Doubles from \$119.**  
Enquiries: 700 West Main Street, Louisville (00 1 502 217 6300; [www.21cmuseumhotel.com](http://www.21cmuseumhotel.com))



### Kansas

Urban-living Americans call the Kansas plains "Flyover Land", and the state still suffers from a hokey reputation involving check shirts, homespun values and gun-toting Christian fundamentalism. But this is small-town America at its vast and fascinating best; stop at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve for a reminder of how the Great Plains of America used to look – rolling grasslands, huge skies and endlessly stretching horizons.

**Enquiries: 001 620 273 8494; [www.nps.gov/tapr](http://www.nps.gov/tapr)**



### New York

The notorious Chelsea Hotel makes it a more obvious starting-point for a boho road-trip, but have your send-off at the Ian Schrager-designed Gramercy Park instead – think Warhol theme night at Wayne Manor. Head to the newly opened private roof club, complete with retractable roof.

**Doubles from \$580.**  
Enquiries: 2 Lexington Ave (00 1 212 920 3300; [www.gramercyparkhotel.com](http://www.gramercyparkhotel.com))



### West Loop, Chicago

Spend your time in Chicago's newly fashionable area, the meatpacking district, where new art galleries and clubs are popping up alongside the abattoirs. It's edgy, interesting and slightly smelly. Eat, drink and dance at Victor Hotel, a former-meat-locker-now-trendy-nightclub.

**Enquiries: Victor Hotel, 311 North Sangamon Street (00 1 312 733 6900; [www.victorhotelchicago.com](http://www.victorhotelchicago.com))**



### Scottsdale

This unassuming satellite of Pheonix, Arizona, continues to be a hub for design hotels and cutting-edge eco-projects; it's also a trekking centre, offers destination golf courses and is home to more than 100 galleries. Stay at the Mondrian Scottsdale Hotel, with its Garden of Eden-inspired interiors and open-air living room.

**Doubles from \$330.**  
Enquiries: 7353 East Indian School Road (00 1 480 308 1100; [www.mondrianscottsdale.com](http://www.mondrianscottsdale.com))

