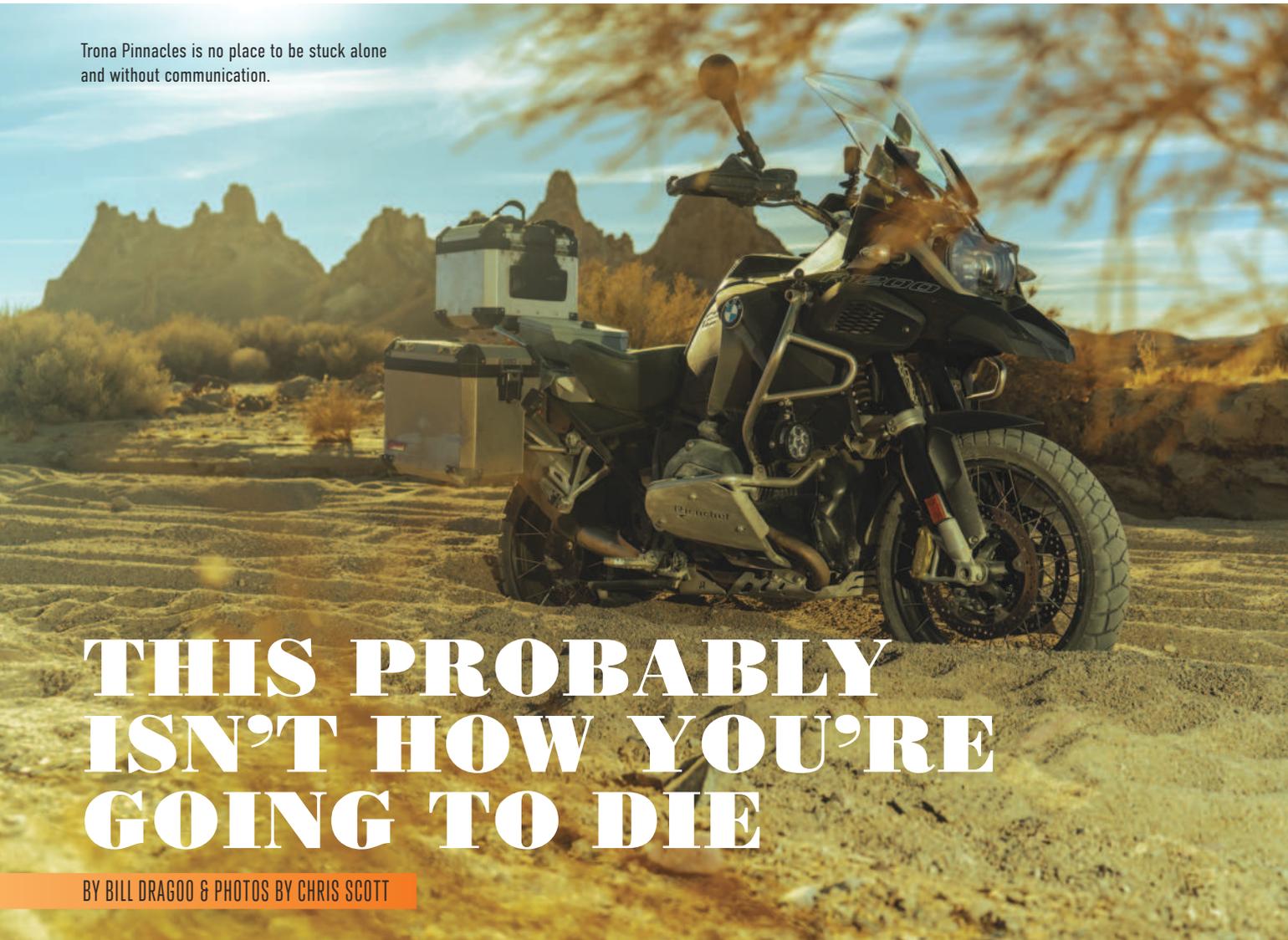


Trona Pinnacles is no place to be stuck alone and without communication.



THIS PROBABLY ISN'T HOW YOU'RE GOING TO DIE

BY BILL DRAGOO & PHOTOS BY CHRIS SCOTT

WHEN IT ALL GOES PEAR-SHAPED, OUR BEST RESOURCE LIES BETWEEN OUR EARS

Adventure riders are masters at getting ourselves into situations from which we have no idea how we might escape. When all seems lost, we enter a primal state of mind. This is when we begin to think outside the box—to use our instincts and focus all of life's experiences on a single mission: our rescue.

Trona Pinnacles, California, is a strange and desolate place. So odd in fact that its eerie calcium carbonate spires were backdrops for movies like *Star Trek V* and *Planet of the Apes*. It is desert, and the sand is deep. Signs warn visitors not to venture into the riskier areas, but I was confident that day a decade ago. Perhaps too confident, even as the thermometer

read 107 degrees. It was no place to be alone.

My loaded BMW R1200 GSA wallowed and plowed through the granular mire, finally becoming stuck. At 175 pounds, I was no match for the 700-pound behemoth laden with spare tires and fully packed aluminum panniers...even a top box. I was tired, low on water, and I had to return the way I had come. It was a time for prayer and contemplation.

Certainly, training can be helpful when the chips are down. Also, having practiced extraction methods, carrying equipment to aid in self-rescue, and communication devices to call in the cavalry are means to prevent a breakdown or recovery from the situation becoming life-threatening. But when it all goes pear-shaped, our best resource lies between our ears. When the need for self-recovery is imminent, stop, relax, and think. Odds are, this is not the event that will end it all. And rather than relying on statistics which, thankfully, are in our favor, or luck, which is not within our control, assess the situation and formulate a plan. Here are some steps to help organize your priorities.