

## **Kelly McConnell**

The first time during the Hoka Hey that I considered I might die was on the second day. It was about 4 a.m. and I was riding alone through dangerous unpaved mountain roads trying to make it to the second checkpoint. I had been riding for almost 24 hours. I was exhausted and my ego had quit working somewhere in Florida. At the very moment that I had accepted I might not finish the challenge, I saw the headlight of another challenger. That night, I became part of a rolling tribe of riders that began to team up to make it through the night together. By 11 a.m., I found myself riding into the second checkpoint with 8 other challengers. It was then, that I began to understand what my Hoka Hey was about, and what the journey was meant to teach me.

It is with complete and total certainty that I say, participating in the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge was the best personal journey that I have ever had in my life. The event established the foundation for an unexpected spiritual journey of epic proportions. My Hoka Hey experience consisted of facing myself in a way that I had never expected. I was faced with every possible emotion that a human can experience and challenged physically, psychologically and spiritually. The lessons that I learned about attitude, fear, friendship, perseverance and faith have left me a changed person. The motorcycle ride was fantastic, witnessing the beauty of two countries. However, the personal journey was more majestic than any mountain range I rode by.

The woman that crossed the finish line in Alaska was a far cry from the woman that left Key West on June 20. Every day of the event was another opportunity to learn something about myself, life and the people that I was blessed to ride with. The only regret I have about the Hoka Hey was entering it with expectations, as I wasted some time being attached to what I thought it should have been instead of realizing the truly exceptional experience that unfolded every moment of the ride. Hoka Hey!!!

~ Kelly McConnell, Mine Hill, NJ