



Rumble in the jungle

By HAMISH COOPER

YOU don't need the latest high-tech adventure tourer to have the ride of your life.

Just ask former world triathlon champion Felix Bergmeister, who is finishing the African leg of a two-year, round-the-world journey as an ambassador for UNICEF.

Unlike Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman in their Long Way Round odyssey, Bergmeister rejected the latest BMW models for a humble old R80 GS.

"As it turned out, there couldn't have been a better bike for me," he says.

"The flat-twin boxer engine is extremely reliable. The set-up with the two carburettors is simple enough to repair in the middle of the Congo.

"The R80 GS was also the choice for Ted Simon (author of the seminal 1970s travelogue Jupiter's Travels) on his second trip around the world (at age 69 in 2000), so it can't be bad!"

Modifications to the old hack were little more than a 32-litre fuel tank and stronger suspension springs.

The only major problem Bergmeister has endured would have terminally crippled a more modern motorcycle.

At a border crossing, a faulty starter relay set fire to his entire electrical system.



Uneasy rider: Felix Bergmeister strips the bike after a deep water experience and (right) Bergmeister kitted out for his adventure

"Because the bike is so simple, I could repair it by just ripping a cable out of an old car and wiring the whole thing up again," Bergmeister says.

He says virtually anyone could undertake an adventure like his but recommends they take an off-road riding course before embarking.

