



## Behind the Scenes at Klim

by Alisa Clickenger (MotoAdventureGal) / photos by Scott Tomlinson of Klim

**K**lim, it's a name on most riders' lips these days, whether they fancy dirt or adventure bikes. Few motorcyclists seem to know how to pronounce the company name (just remember, "Klim" sounds like "climb"), but that doesn't seem to change the company's popularity. Thanks to Klim's new dual-sport adventure suits, the *Badlands* and *Latitude*, the company is all over the forums and airwaves, whether or not you can pronounce the company name.

While Klim is a recent entrant in the adventure motorcycle apparel arena, they have, in fact, been developing quality dirt gear for some time now. The company started out more than a decade ago making cold weather gear for outdoor workers at ski resorts. A short time later, Klim founder, Justin Summers, a passionate snowmobiler, saw all the applications for outdoor adventure wear. That's when the company really started to grow and became a premium gear manufacturer.

But Klim's head honcho isn't your average toodle-through-the-woods snowmobiler; he takes the sport to an extreme with a 350 horsepower hill climber with a turbo boost. He found his gear needed to keep up with he and his friends in that endeavor, so he took product development to the



Klim's nondescript offices are quite deceiving from the outside.

extreme edge just as he did his winter sports. His summer-season sport is riding motorcycles, so it follows that was the next step in Klim's evolution. And given Klim's high-end reputation in the snowmobiling industry, it's easy to see how hitting a home run with their dual-sport gear was the only option.

One way Klim stands apart from their competitors is the simple fact that they do everything in-house. To the best of



### Klim's dual-sport development guru, Edward Wilkinson, out on a weekend ride

my knowledge, they are the only motorcycle apparel manufacturer that do that. (Most big-name brands hire a team to develop their gear with their name on it—outsourcing the ideas, R&D—and quality control.) Klim's research and development is done in Rigby, Idaho, as well as marketing, distribution, customer service and warranty.

Not to mention product testing, which is done by Justin Summers himself, both on his snowmobile and on his 2011 KTM 990. Dual-Sport Product Line Manager, Edward Wilkinson, tests all the prototypes on his KTM Super Enduro. And the dirt bike product developer? He races a 2011 KTM 530 XCW. Even the creative-type designers grab a mouse in one hand and an open throttle in the other. It's obvious from all the riding conversations buzzing between Klim employees that Idaho is, in fact, a dual-sport paradise and ideal proving ground.

Klim welcomes travelers to their headquarters in Rigby, and enjoys meeting their customers face-to-face. I grabbed the chance to get a tour of the facilities, and rolled up to their headquarters last fall. My first thought when I entered the building was, "Is everyone in Idaho this nice?" Everyone I saw said hello and had time for a chat. It seemed, based upon the cross-section of native Idahoans and transplants I met during my tour, the answer was overwhelmingly "Yes!"

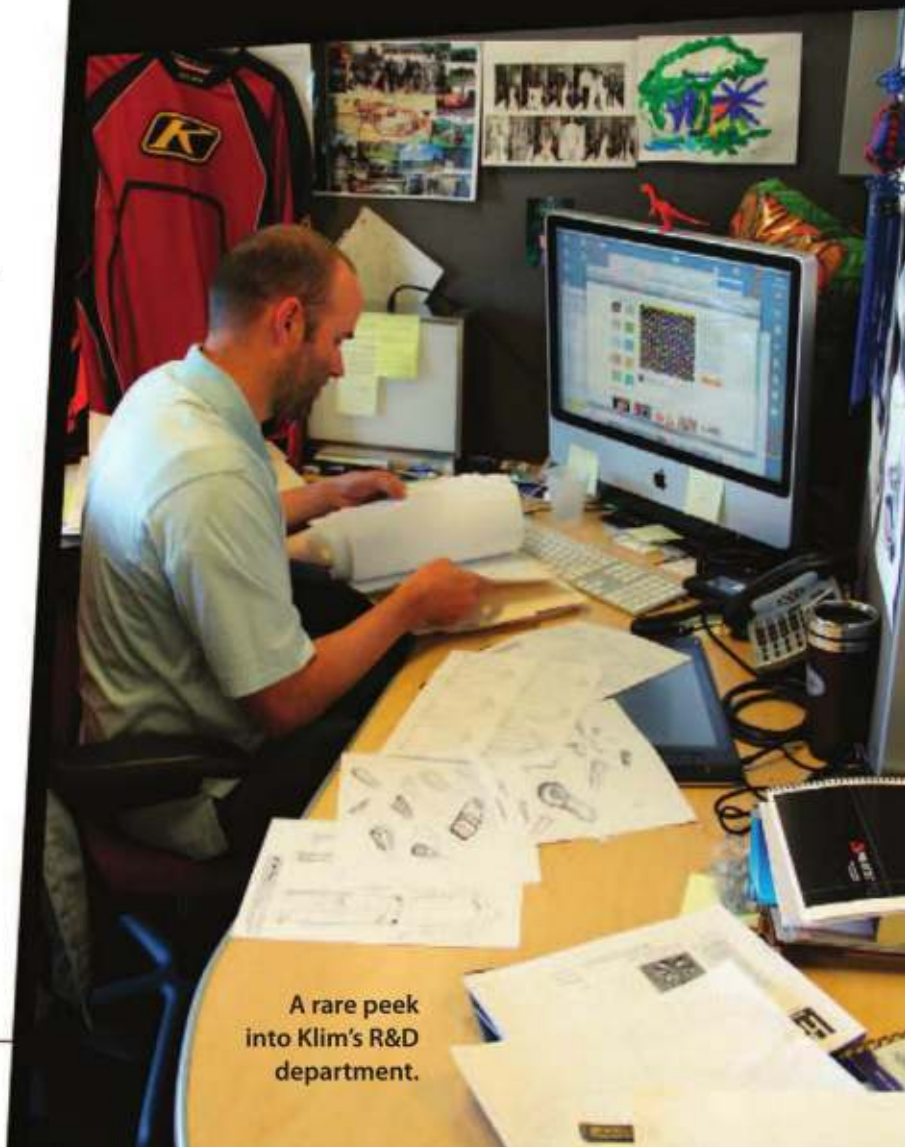
My tour started downstairs, at reception. I got to see the sales department hustling (Klim produces limited quantities of its products, and evidently the sales folks don't actually have to sell, but rather juggle orders and qualities). The warranty department as well as research and development are also downstairs, although the R&D department is almost always off-limits.

I did get to grab a peek at the R&D meeting room, which is essentially a motorcyclists' dream

## How I came to work for Klim

"In 2009 I was riding the Trans-America Trail in a pair of Klim motocross pants, the Chinooks, and I kept remarking on what good quality they are. After finishing the TAT I decided to ride the Continental Divide, and the route took me close to Rigby, Idaho, where Klim is based. I stopped by for a visit, and liked the atmosphere of the company. Finishing up my ride back to the east coast, I kept thinking how cool it would be to work there, and use all my product development experience and cutting edge ideas to develop the best motorcycle gear on the market. I guess it was a matter of perfect timing to pursue a job with them, because Klim hired me on and decided to get into dual-sport gear in a big way. I like to think, in part, it was the impression I made showing up on their doorstep in full ATGATT (All the Gear, All the Time) and talking about my epic adventure as well as future opportunities that finally won them over."

—Edward Wilkinson



A rare peek into Klim's R&D department.



Gear junkies, try not to hyperventilate in Klim's warehouse.

## Giving Back

It's not all about the corporate bling at Klim. They conduct themselves as a family-run business, mostly because it is family for everyone who works there. They support each other, and they also support a great many up-and-coming riders as well as Dakar racers Jonah Street and Ned Suesse.

Klim gives back to the community and to the industry. The company is highly supportive of several land use advocacy groups, such as the Blue Ribbon Coalition and the Trails Preservation Alliance. Klim offered up their first Annual Adventure Rider Summit summer 2011, and they donate gear to a great many rider causes and charities through industry partners. Klim also donates directly to the Pink Ribbon Riders on select pink ribbon snowmobile apparel.

closet. Brimming with every type of protective gear and accessory a rider could ever want, or invent, the table in the middle of the room just serves as another surface for gear. Just outside R&D lockdown, Klim has their own product testing lab, where they do Gore-Tex® testing and other top secret stuff.

At the end of the hall, the warehouse simply blew my mind. Acres of apparel stacked floor to ceiling, in endless rows, with state-of-the-art technology cataloging each item. And not a single thing out of place. There were too many forklifts to count, and enough worker bees to remind you of a very active hive. It's obviously a fun place to work, as I came late in the day and they were rocking out to tunes while polishing and buffing the floors, maintaining equipment, and congratulating themselves on the number of boxes shipped that day.

Upstairs, that's where customer service is located, and so is the marketing department. I was surprised to see fellow journalist-turned-Communications-Manager, Jesse Ziegler (former Executive Editor of *Dirt Rider* magazine). Remember how I said everyone at Klim is an enthusiast? Ziegler is an avid snowmobiler as well as an accomplished motocross and off-road machine test rider.

Across the catwalk there's a huge lunch room and kitchen, and it's company tradition every Thursday for each employee to take a turn cooking lunch for the others. A daunting task as the company approaches fifty employees, yet it serves as a community-building exercise each week as the entire company comes together. Thursday lunches are followed by a quick all-company meeting, which includes presentation of the "Star of the Week" award for an employee that's gone above and beyond the call of duty.

The last room I am taken to is the most impressive, in terms of sheer size and full-on WOW factor. It's Klim's conference room, and it seats most of the company. The room has state-of-the-art high-definition video conferencing for product training seminars and for communicating with overseas partners. Lining the walls are all of Klim's products, snow and motorcycle, in every shape and size and product color option available, each individually lit. There is gear on hangers, on mannequins, and on racks, and it's more akin to Fifth Avenue than in a corporate think tank.



Be advised, Klim's conference room makes visitors want to whip out their credit card.



Bikes belonging to adventure riders can often be found parked out front of Klim's Rigby, Idaho headquarters.

## Klim USA

3753 East County Line Rd.  
Rigby Idaho 83442  
208-552-7433  
[www.Klim.com](http://www.Klim.com)

I admit I was shocked to see state-of-the-art in Idaho. I'd previously thought of Idaho as "the potato state," and wondered why anyone would want to live there. Yet it's clear in everything from the community atmosphere to the Tetons in the background why so many talented folks come to work at Klim in little Rigby, Idaho. And little wonder that Klim has accelerated to the top of the motorcycle apparel market. Even if you don't pronounce their name right. **ADV**

While Klim is a brand known for having multiple copies of their logo on all of their gear, not so with their building. There's a discreet "K" carved into the four corners of their building, but no other road-side signage.