

## IntelliSkin Foundation Shirt



Reviewed by Mark Barnes

**W**E'D TRIED COMPRESSION clothing in the past, but haven't always been impressed. Such gear claims to improve circulation, reduce muscular fatigue/soreness and speed post-exercise recovery time. But sizing is tricky; too small and you feel like a sausage about to burst its casing, too large and there is little benefit.

Still, we knew we needed help, as the soreness created by off-road riding has become more intense and lasts longer than it did when we were younger. And IntelliSkin's additional promises of improved posture and reduced neck/shoulder/back pain suggested that perhaps posture might be a more critical factor than exertion. If this garment could actually help us maintain better posture, as well as deliver the benefits of standard compression gear, maybe it'd be worth its \$95 price.

The Foundation shirt fits tightly, as expected, but it actually does pull your shoulders back and gets your spine more erect. It uses strategically placed elasticized stitching that imitates Kinesio tape, currently popular among elite athletes and physical therapists to selectively support muscles and joints. These flat-stitched elastic seams feel tough, although there's no apparent overlapping of material. Most of the shirt is made of a very robust, tightly

woven, stretchy synthetic, comprised of nylon and "Lycra Power" (Google it), but more loosely woven sections also add welcome ventilation across the upper back.

Like all properly-sized compression clothing, the Foundation shirt is a bit challenging to get on and off. Instructions are provided (see website); follow them for maximum comfort and benefit. That special stitching flanks silver mesh panels, reaching up and over the shoulders from the middle of the back, and four rows also extend down the full length of the spine and along other key contours.

The combined effect is substantial. As we spent more time in proper alignment, muscle memory helped to maintain it, even when not wearing the shirt. According to IntelliSkin, the Foundation shirt does more than just provide support; supposedly stimulating certain nerve endings in the skin to relax tight muscles, toning those that have been underutilized and even cueing the brain to better coordinate muscle groups. We don't know about all that, but it did prompt a straighter posture.

While it's still possible to slouch in the Foundation shirt, it's easier to sit tall and stand more upright, with shoulders back and chest out—with our upper body weight carried efficiently by the skeletal system, instead of by unbalanced muscles.



MARK BARNES PHOTO

This improvement was quite noticeable while riding, and made a stark contrast to the collapsed posture we'd unwittingly adopted over the years.

Soreness during and after riding was significantly less than with other compression gear and the material also wicks moisture. If back, shoulder or neck discomfort interferes with your riding enjoyment, we think the Foundation shirt is worth a try.

**IntelliSkin USA**—20162 SW Birch St. #125, Newport Beach, CA 92660-0788; 855-554-7546; [www.intelliskin.net](http://www.intelliskin.net); Foundation Shirt (white/silver or black/silver, sizes XS-XXXL); MSRP \$95 (\$85 at Amazon.com)

## The Road to Getting Yourself Out of the Way: A Journey to Effortless Living



Reviewed by Steve Larsen

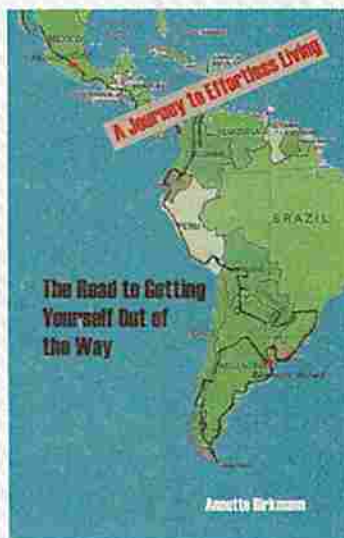
**O**N A WARM night early in 2009, Annette Birkmann, a blond, Danish woman with piercing blue eyes and a ready smile, stood in front of 80 or so riders at the BMW/Triumph dealership in Mountain View, California. She had just arrived after spending a year riding from Tierra del Fuego, the southern tip of South America, to San Francisco, alone, on her 2001 BMW F650 Dakar. I was there and observed the affect she had on the assembled riders, who viewed her with intense interest and a palpable awe. Interviewing her a few days later, I shared her adventure with readers of this magazine in our April 2009 issue.

Now Birkmann has told her story in a new book, "The Road to Getting Yourself Out of the Way: A Journey to Effortless Living." Birkmann's tale is far less a primer on how (or how not) to prepare for a year-long, one-person motorcycle trip through South America than it is one person's journey of coming to terms with life's elemental truths. With exceptional honesty, Birkmann chronicles her struggles with wrong-headed thinking and the roadblocks to a state of mind in which she feels the simple joy of just being alive. Her hard-won breakthroughs in understanding are described in terms any long-term rider will understand, the feeling of riding without fear, completely present in the Now, when every movement of the bike becomes effortless and time seems to stand still.

In south Patagonia on a ferry ride to Castro on the island of

Chiloe, Birkmann realizes the same conflicts and problems she'd left Denmark and her law career to escape had somehow followed her to South America. Continuing to see the world the same way resulted in similar situations with just the surroundings and people being a bit different. She slowly comprehends that the stillness and joy she is seeking is not the result of attainment, but from surrendering to the moment as it is—not her story about it—but the simplicity of what each moment offers.

This is a highly original and personal story. If you enjoy exploring the spiritual side of motorcycling, you'll love this book. If you've read "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," you will find this book more instructive, practical and inspiring.



Available from Amazon.com (\$17.99 for paperback, \$9.99 for the Kindle version)