



TIPS FOR A SAFER RIDE

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Motorcycle riding involves three different types of preparation: physical, mental and equipment. You just can't afford to neglect any of them. Respecting the preparation process leads to a more enjoyable ride.

Being in good condition is beneficial for a motorcyclist, especially since physical endurance and mental alertness are key factors during longer rides. As being able to see clearly and with an unobstructed view is extremely important you should:

- Always use a helmet with a clear visor – you can always wear sunglasses beneath the visor. This way, you'll have better vision at all times, especially if you are riding when it's dark.
 - If your bike is equipped with a windshield, it should be approximately 1 1/2" lower than your line of sight when you are seated in your riding position.
 - Never expose your eyes to intense light just before night riding. Let your eyes get used to lower-light conditions and, at the same time, focus on your upcoming ride.
 - Always carry a cloth and lens cleaner to keep your headlight, glasses, visor, rearview mirrors and windshield, if applicable, clean.
 - Even if you're a seasoned pro, be sure to take a few minutes to perform a pre-ride safety checklist, which seems to be often overlooked. Of vital importance are the condition of your tires and brakes. Make sure both are in very good condition. Warm up a bit by doing stretching exercises before even starting your bike. Make sure you are in proper shape to ride. Do you feel any pain or are you limited in movement when you rotate your head to check your blind spots?
 - In the event that your bike falls, do you know how to lift it properly and do you have enough strength to bring your bike back on its wheels without hurting yourself?
 - Periodically practice basic skills like sharp left/right turns, low speed balance, emergency braking in a straight line and in a curve at all (legal) speeds, and countersteering to ensure your reaction time is a reflex rather than a distant memory.
 - Take a refresher course each spring to familiarize yourself with your motorcycle and to practice your skills.
 - Identify and refer to credible sources of information about safe motorcycle riding, such as publications and experienced riders.
- Consider taking an advanced riding course to continue to develop your riding skills and learn how to anticipate, avoid and/or survive high-risk riding scenarios.
 - When riding with passengers, never forget that you are responsible for them. Take into consideration the effects of the passenger on the motorcycle (balancing, handling characteristics, suspension, tire pressure, braking and acceleration, fuel consumption) and the clothing required (no loose clothing) for different weather conditions. Impress them by showing them how fun and relaxing a motorcycle ride can be.
 - Group riding is fun but requires special skills. Most riders prefer smaller groups. Learn more about group riding in The Two-day Ride. Mental preparation is a key part of motorcycle riding. To process information and respond immediately to any situation while on the road, you need to concentrate at all times.
 - Your perception and reaction to any riding situation depend greatly on your ATTITUDE. Don't let anger, stress, grief, joy or any other emotion decrease your level of concentration.
 - Free your mind of any distraction that can preoccupy you during the ride.
 - Be careful with a new motorcycle or a borrowed one – even a model you're used to may surprise you due to different adjustments or tires.
 - Avoid alcohol and drugs. They impair your physical and mental abilities to perceive and react.

Small things can result in big consequences when we consider motorcycling equipment. Read all about clothing and accessories in Rider Accessories and Motorcycle Accessories.



MOTORCYCLE ACCESSORIES

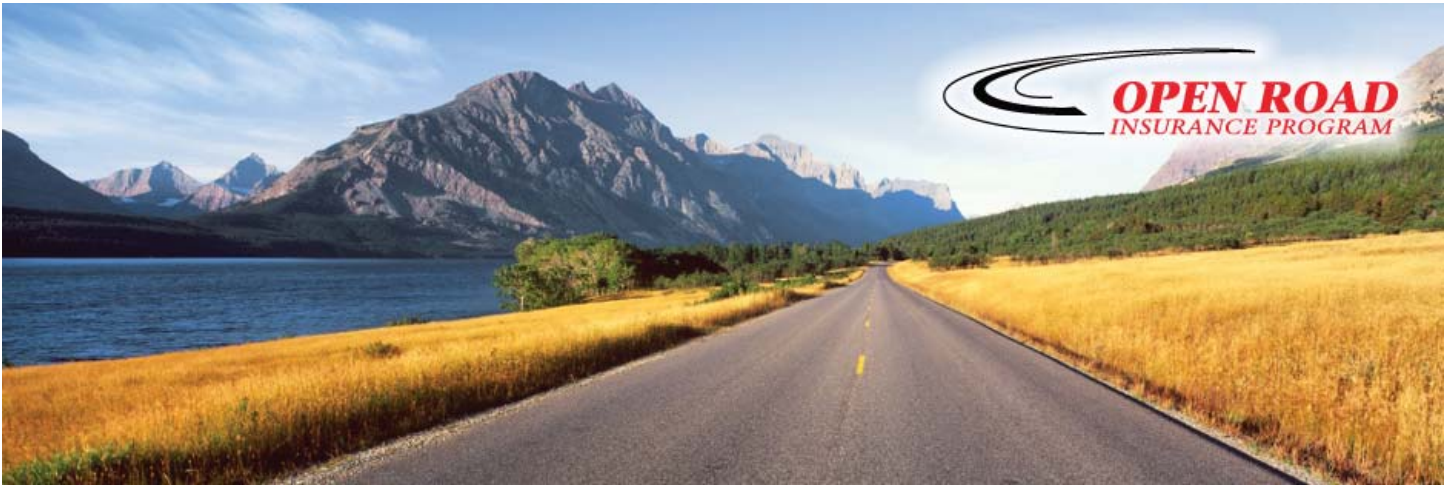
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An impressive quantity of motorcycle accessories is available from original and aftermarket manufacturers. Original equipment may often be more expensive, but quality and fit may explain the price. However, some quality aftermarket accessories can respond to your needs, especially when originals don't exist. Installation by your dealer can ensure that you don't compromise on safety. The questions you need to seriously answer are:

DO I NEED...

- **A good set of tires?** There is so much to say about choosing the correct set of tires. Remember, the contact patch of a motorcycle tire is about the size of the palm of your hand, so ensure your tire quality makes the most of that area. Consider your riding habits when talking to your dealer.
- **A windshield?** Small, handlebar-mounted windshields can improve the look of your bike in addition to providing better wind protection to your upper body. The bigger the handlebar-mounted windshield is, the more it changes the handling, which also varies according to speed. Frame-mounted fairings are bigger, heavier, and more expensive and they're usually original equipment. They offer excellent protection for the whole body, small storage compartments and the option to install different gauges (oil pressure, coolant temperature, voltmeter, etc.). Note that the installation of a frame-mounted fairing is a professional's job.
- **A steering damper?** Aggressive steering geometry and driving on an uneven pavement surface are situations that call for the use of a steering damper. Sport bikes operating at higher speeds may experience the stressful situation of steering instability. It is recommended to have it installed and adjusted by your dealer.
- **An ultrasound whistle?** It may keep wild animals away from your moving bike but it has to be clean to do so.
- **A fork brace?** Older motorcycles with a smaller fork tube diameter could use a fork brace for steering stability and constant braking capacity. More recent bikes often have bigger fork tubes and/or a front fender integrated fork brace.
- **Air pressure variation indicator tire valve caps?** Using a color code, these caps indicate even slight variations in tire air pressure at a glance. They are fast and easy to install and should be installed just before balancing your wheels.
- **Crash bars?** Nobody intentionally makes their bike fall and certainly no one wants to pay for repairs on a bike that has fallen without crash bars. Experienced riders know at least one motorcyclist who has dropped their bike: Themselves. As for the highway pegs you fit on crash bars... they look cool, until you have to react to an emergency situation.
- **More powerful headlight bulbs?** You can see better at night but can your electrical system take it? Will your electrical wires overheat? Ask your dealer. Is your headlight clean and well adjusted? Ask yourself!
- **Adjustable levers?** You should be able to easily reach your levers to perform powerful braking or to disengage the gearbox, without them ever touching your grips.
- **Baggage racks?** A top case? Saddlebags? A tank bag? Carrying objects on a motorcycle raises safety concerns that are discussed in The Two-day Ride. Exactly how much weight can your bike carry? First, make sure you take into consideration the following: the weight of the motorcycle with a full tank of gas, the weight of every needed liquid, battery and tool kit along with the weight of the fully-dressed rider and passenger. Then, consult your manual to check the overall capacity of the motorcycle. Note that the bigger bikes are not always the ones with the biggest weight capacity.

A motorcycle is inherently well balanced. Any alteration should be carefully planned and performed by your dealer or other trustworthy party. You should also inform your insurance company when adding accessories to ensure a precise evaluation.



RIDER ACCESSORIES

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Why buy an expensive leather suit when you can get a nice, comfortable, well-ventilated suit made of synthetic fibre, that's also a rain suit, for one third the price? The way you dress to ride will always be a very personal choice. However, some facts should be taken into consideration.

The following specifications make a leather suit a real protective accessory :

- Because of its specific molecular structure, leather is the only fibre that is strong in every direction at the same time. Synthetic fibres can be very strong in one direction (they can literally be bullet-proof), but because of the way the suit can move on your body when you fall and slide, it could wear down rapidly.
- It has to be "full grain" leather, which is more like the skin of the animal, showing many imperfections – this is what provides the protective quality in a suit. In contrast, fashion leather has to look perfect, which comes at the price of protection. The look is created by removing the outer, dense (abrasion-resistant) part of the skin (with the imperfections). A fake, veiny look is printed on the softer, much less abrasion-resistant skin remaining . As a result, the protective purpose of the suit is compromised.
- If it's too large or not fitted, it's going to act like a parachute, tiring you more, lowering your concentration level and offering a creased surface if sliding on pavement, tearing off faster and exposing the next protective layer: your skin. A mandarin collar is recommended as it is tight around your neck, keeping wind outside.
- Seams with reversed stitching are stronger. Nylon thread is solid and resistant to humidity but can cut leather under pressure. Cotton thread won't cut leather but is less resistant to humidity. The best compromise is a mix of nylon and cotton.
- Leather won't slide easily on your motorcycle seat when braking, accelerating or during driving manoeuvres.

Another important decision is the choice of an open-face or full-face helmet. The look, the feeling of freedom in the wind or claustrophobia may lure you towards the open-face helmet, but for safety and comfort in less-than-perfect weather conditions, you should use a full-face helmet.

- A good quality full-face helmet is, most of the time, a one-piece shell. Look for the Snell Foundation sticker. (The Foundation is a well-known security approval organization.) As for fit, carbon fibre or Kevlar are strong, light and expensive materials that will add long-term comfort. Look for a helmet that provides good ventilation. Also, white or light colors will stay cooler than dark ones and make you easier to see. When choosing your helmet, wear it for at least 20 minutes to ensure a uniform fit with no pressure points. If you don't have a lens cleaner on hand, pick up wipes (or wet napkins) at restaurants to remove dirt and bugs from your helmet visor, windshield and headlight.

- Good motorcycle boots have no laces but a zipper on the side or rear, hidden by a flap. The sole is good quality rubber with a low heel so you can move your feet as needed on the footrests. A second layer of leather where the boot is in contact with the shifter ensures durability. Your boots should also have shin protection.

- Rubber boots that you slip over leather ones will keep your feet dry (and warm in cold weather). Long-sleeved rubber gloves will do the same for your hands. If you believe there is no bad weather, only badly-equipped motorcyclists, you need a top-quality one-piece rain suit with a comfortable adjustable collar. You should not be reaching through any openings for your wallet or forgotten keys – rather, you should have an outside pocket with a long enough flap so your wallet always stays dry.

Talk to your dealer about quality rider equipment.



HOW TO PLAN YOUR TWO-DAY RIDE

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What's more pleasant than a well-planned two-day motorcycle ride with good friends, beautiful roads and great weather? Here are some tips to make that dream come true:

- Use your motorcycle tool kit for routine maintenance a few days before leaving and upgrade it if required. Always carry spare fuses, bulbs, bungee cords, duct tape, a multi-purpose knife, water to drink (and clean wounds if needed) and a complete first-aid kit, including a Providone bottle for disinfection. (Believe it or not, it may take a few hours before you see a doctor.)
- Flat tire repair kits or cans rarely provide the required air pressure. A good quality air pump is recommended to complete the job.
- You risk permanent damage to your ears in the long term if you subject them to highway-speed wind noise for more than 45 minutes a day. Wearing ear plugs will bring the noise level down a few decibels and you'll still be able to hear someone honking at you, but **DON'T YELL AT THE GAS STATION ATTENDANT!**
- The importance of vision is discussed in How to be a Safer Rider, but it may be wise to bring eye drops on a two-day ride because the more tired you get, the less you blink your eyes to lubricate them.
- Roll your clothes for less wrinkles. Bring only what you really need.
- Pack everything separately in strong hermetic plastic bags so you can draw the air out from them and keep the contents dry.
- Put heavier things on the bottom and make sure you balance the weight on the left and right. Heavy baggage should not be placed behind the rear wheel axle. Ensure easy access to your extra sweater and rain gear.
- Attach all baggage solidly, using tie-downs, bungee cords and elastic spider webs. Every so often, make sure that every attachment stays in place and cannot interfere with any component of the motorcycle. (We all know the "passenger's-scarf-in-the-rear-sprocket" story.) Beware of too much surface to side winds, which will create disequilibrium. Ensure your bike's cosmetic parts, seat and paint are protected from being damaged by any baggage or attachment. Rear lights, flashers and reflectors must never be hidden.
- A tank bag is very practical for light or precious things like your wallet, phone and glasses. It serves as your handbag when you park at a restaurant. Magnetic tank bags don't need straps or buckles to hold them, but your fuel tank must not be aluminium or plastic. Make sure your tank bag comes with a shower cap.
- Reset your trip meter every fuel fill-up and, knowing your reserve capacity, figure out when your next stop should be. Keep in mind that facing strong winds with a passenger and baggage can represent a more than 30% increase in fuel consumption, compared to riding solo with a backwind.
- If you have to cross borders, make sure to bring every pertinent document.
- A staggered formation requires special preparation and an understanding of each person's responsibility to the group. Establish simple arm and hand signals and always respect a safe distance between members of the group, which varies according to speed. The most experienced rider should be the leader. The least experienced should be second so that he has the clearest view ahead, with his only riding reference being the leader. The second most experienced rider should be last, "covering" the back of the group and dealing with the greatest "elastic effect" (braking and acceleration necessary to maintain the formation). The more experience a rider has, the closer to the rear he should ride.
- A single-file formation becomes appropriate when lanes narrow, on twisty roads or when passing anywhere other than multi-lane roads.
- Contact local or provincial tourism organizations when planning your ride. Often, they can advise of the services available and any unique requirements of which you should be aware.