

# Motorcycle GUIDE



# Plan a Road Trip

**T**raveling the country's highways on a motorcycle can be exciting. It is the chance to take a journey and find a new perspective of exploring that may not be noticed in a car or truck. But a road trip on a bike takes serious planning.

One reason motorcycles are so attractive to road-trippers is their fuel efficiency. According to a 2015 report from the Federal Highway Administration, the average fuel economy of motorcycles was 43.54 miles per gallon. While the smaller gas tanks may require more frequent stops at the filling station, depending on your route, the cost per fill-up is much lower than most trucks or cars.

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Before leaving on a long-distance trip, you'll want to make sure your bike is ready for safe travel. Here are some professional services you should complete before you hit the road.

**Oil:** Check your maintenance schedule to find out if you are due for an oil change or will surpass the recom-



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mended miles on your travels. You may choose to change the fluid and filter before leaving or make sure there is a qualified shop along your path.

**Check for working lights:** It is crucial to ensure all lights are working properly. Not only will they help you navigate during nighttime hours, they also signal your intentions to other drivers. Being seen is one of the most important parts of stay-

ing safe while on a motorcycle.

**Condition of tires:** A blow-out on a motorcycle can cause critical injuries or even death. Make sure to have your tires properly inspected to determine the amount of life they have left.

## GEAR TO CONSIDER

The clothing and accessories you bring will add to your overall comfort and safety. Check

the forecasts along your desired path and dress accordingly.

Here are some other items you should consider, according to Nationwide.

**Think rainproof:** You will likely encounter rain at some point if you're traveling very far. Pack jackets, pants and gear that repels water – and don't forget to pack it all in a waterproof bag.

**Eyewear:** Protect your eyes during your road trip. Make sure to bring along sunglasses and rain or night goggles.

**Tools:** Bring along necessary tools to make general repairs in case things go wrong on your journey.

When you take the time to properly plan the route of your destination, your road trip will go off without many unexpected issues.

# Dealer or Private Party

**A**lthough buying a motorcycle from a private party may save you a little money, the safest way to protect your investment is to purchase from an authorized dealer.

One of the advantages you'll find when buying used or new from your local dealer is a wider variety of motorcycles. You'll also enlist the help of an expert who can fit you into the best bike for your experience levels. If you're looking to get rid of your bike, a dealer will also give you the opportunity to trade it in rather than having to prepare it for a sale.

## DEALER ADVANTAGES

Just like a used car lot, motorcycle dealerships may offer a certified pre-owned guarantee and warranty. This shows that the vehicle has been properly inspected and any mechanical or safety issues have been corrected. Many motorcycle repairs can be expensive. Eligibility for an included or extended warranty can ensure your investment will be repaired by professionals and save you money later.

A dealership can also give you the opportunity to legally test drive a motorcycle. When testing a bike from a private seller you may find yourself operating a vehicle that is not properly registered or lacks insurance. If you get caught behind the handlebars, you may be subject to expensive fines and fees from law officials.

## DEALING WITH A PRIVATE PARTY

If you do decide to make a private purchase, make sure to research the motorcycle's history. You should receive a vehicle history report to reveal accident history, how many owners it's had, an accurate odometer reading and any recorded-service history. You may also want to visit a reputable mechanic to have them check the bike over.

Keep in mind that a private purchase will be on an "as-is" basis after a sale. Ask yourself if the risk of a bad investment is worth saving a few dollars during the initial sale, and shop around at your local dealerships. You may actually find comparable deals on their lots.



# Advances in Safety

**T**hanks to stricter laws regarding helmets and efforts from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, more people are aware of motorcycle safety. New models of bikes are also incorporating some incredible features to make the roads safer for those in control.

## THREE WHEELERS

Three-wheeled motorcycles are also becoming popular among riders, especially those who are aging and find it difficult to control a two-wheeled vehicle. They are considered safer due to their ability to balance themselves, making it much easier on the operator.

## ENHANCED LIGHTING

Being visible to other drivers is one of the most important aspects of safety for motorcyclists. To give other drivers the opportunity to keep a safe following distance and see you coming, it is crucial that each light on your vehicle is functioning properly.

Motorcycle manufacturers are helping the cause by including LED lighting to provide more than just an awesome aesthetic. Not only do the new lights help motorcycles attract more attention from other vehicles, they are also great at creating a clear path of vision for the driver. Even helmets are receiving LED upgrades to increase visibility.

## ANTI-LOCK BRAKES

Borrowing from a long-standing industry standard for cars and trucks, motorcycles are adopting anti-lock braking technology. According to the Insurance



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Institute for Highway Safety, the rate of fatal crashes is 31 percent lower for bikes equipped with optional ABS.

In a car, locking the brakes can be the difference between an accident and stopping in the nick of time. Traditionally,

fast braking for a motorcycle means a serious fall, and possibly critical injuries. By taking advantage of an anti-lock brake system, sensors determine when the wheel is about to stop rotating and adjust the amount of pressure that is

applied. It's important to remember that ABS will not affect normal braking, it is only noticed during emergency stopping situations.

## STABILITY CONTROL

One common way acci-

dents occur when biking is from accelerating or braking during a turn. Thanks to new stability-control systems, traction control and lean-angle data sends the correct amount of power to the brakes.



# Know Your Tires

**K**eeping the shoes on your bike in good shape is important. There are small contact patches located on each tire — the only components working to give a motorcycle traction. Don't hit the road without good rubber underneath you.

Did you know that the way you drive may lead to early deterioration of your tires? According to the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, the rubber is designed to provide maximum traction at specific temperatures.

If you start your journey at a moderate speed, your tires will be able to rise to the proper operation temperature without experiencing premature damage.

## HOW TO SELECT A TIRE

Much like other vehicles, motorcycles are designed to use a specific set of tires. Your best bet in finding the right tire is to consult your user manual. It will specify the correct size, construction, load range and speed index. Sometimes it will even tell you which manufacturer's tires accompanied the bike out of the factory.

If you don't have a manual, it is important to check in with a

local dealer or motorcycle shop. They have the knowledge and resources to determine the set that will operate properly with your bike.

## WATCH FOR WEAR BARS

Most motorcycle tire manufacturers include small wear bars in the grooves that become visible when the rubber wears down. According to the MCF, the warning signs will appear when less than a quar-

ter-inch of tread is remaining. These wear bars are not a warning that tires will be needed soon — they should be replaced as soon as or before they become visible.

## PROFESSIONAL INSTALLATION

Mounting motorcycle tires should only be done by a professional mechanic with the proper tools. Attempting to do it yourself can easily damage

the tire. For the tire to function properly, it's important the bead sits firmly against the rim.

Once your tires have been properly installed by a professional, it's important to drive moderately while the new rubber gets accustomed to the road. Experts say the first 100 miles should be used as a break-in period for the tires and so a driver can get used to the difference that new shoes make over worn-out tread.

# Make Your Motorcycle Shine

**P**art of the enjoyment of owning a motorcycle is putting in some elbow grease to make it shine.

Not only does a thorough handwashing enhance the visual appeal of the bike, keeping it clean will also protect its paint job. Washing the bike also gives owners the chance to look over the vehicle for signs of wear, connection issues or other problems that may be hard to spot when in the driver's seat.

You should wash your bike in a shady spot while the engine is cool. Cleaning in direct sunlight can cause the soap you use to dry faster, increasing the chances of creating streaks or water spots.

## PRE-SOAK

Always rinse the bike off with a combination of soap meant for motorcycles and water before applying pressure from a sponge or rag. Wiping before rinsing increases the chance of spreading fine particles of dirt and grind them into the finish. This is a great way to ruin the perfect paint job that makes your bike stand apart.

Cover your motorcycle with a mist from an approved-spray cleaner and allow it to rest on the finish as directed by the manufacturer. Once the allot-



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ted time has passed, you should lightly spray the soap off with a standard-pressure hose. Power washers are not recommended for this process and the high pressure may damage important components.

## SOAP IT UP

Starting at the top of your motorcycle and working

down, gently lather its components with an appropriate soap. Be sure to rinse your sponge or cloth if you notice it picking up grime or dirt, to protect the finish. Try to avoid direct contact with your bike's chain and brakes. Don't wait too long before rinsing the soap off your machine, as the longer it sits, the more likely it is to leave streaks. Don't forget

to rinse the hard-to-reach places.

## HAND DRY

Shortly after you have completed the washing process, you should take a chamois to remove the standing water. While taking a drive may be the more fun way to dry a bike, it's much more efficient to do it by hand. Once all water is

removed, you can apply a layer of wax to protect the clearcoat and give it a shine.

## DON'T FORGET THE CHAIN

Due to the wet conditions, it's a safe bet your chain will need to be lubed after the washing process. Remember to do this before showing off your shiny bike.



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# Safety Tips For New Riders

If the appeal of cruising American highways on a motorcycle is calling your name, be prepared for increased responsibility when it comes to safety.

Bikes are at a serious disadvantage in protection when compared to other vehicles on the road. To remain safe, it takes serious attention and dedication from everyone on the highway.

You should start out on a motorcycle that doesn't feature some of the high-performance components that

are becoming more common in new models. Also, make sure the bike fits your body, so you can ride in comfort and safely handle and control all functions.

Here are some other safety tips amateur riders or enthusiasts who haven't been on a bike for some time.

## **JOIN AND REPEAT TRAINING COURSES**

Especially for those just starting out on a high-horsepower motorcycle, consider enlisting in safety courses in addition to the requirements of your state's license requirements.

It's a good idea to return to these courses periodically to freshen your

memory on safety measures and learn of new and upcoming concerns officials have. Ask your peers at a local motorcycle club or at a motorcycle dealership for their recommendations on an excellent trainer in your area.

## **ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET**

While the laws in your state may not require a helmet for age-appropriate riders, wearing one can save your life. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, a helmet can reduce the risk of dying in an accident by 37 percent. Riders who ignore these safety tools are three times more likely to sustain traumatic brain injuries in the event of a crash.

## **AVOID BAD WEATHER**

Driving in slippery conditions will greatly reduce the traction your tires create, leaving you open for dangerous errors. If you find yourself in an unpredicted rain or snow shower, be gentle with the brakes, throttle and steering. Overcompensating on any action may cause the bike to veer or slide.

## **CHECK YOUR BIKE BEFORE LEAVING**

It is critical to ensure your bike is road ready before heading out for a joy ride. Ensure your tires are inflated to the proper pressure, all lights are blazing, and brakes are functioning efficiently.

# Safety Statistics

**W**ithout a cabin as in passenger vehicles, motorcycle drivers are much more susceptible to serious injuries during an accident.

These statistics reported by the National Safety Council are intended to show why extreme caution and care should be shown by everyone to keep each other safe. Regardless of the number of wheels that are on your vehicle, we're all in this together.

- In 2015, 4,976 motorcycle drivers and passengers died in crashes. Non-fatal injuries totaled 88,000 cases.

- In 2014, motorcycles accounted for only three percent of registered vehicles, yet were involved in 14 percent of traffic fatalities, 17 percent of all-occupant fatalities and four percent of all-occupant injuries.

- Common reasons vehicles violate a motorcyclists' right of way are: Distracted driving, view of bike is obstructed or didn't anticipate their movements.

- 35 percent of all fatalities in 2015 were riders aged 50 and older.

- In 2015, 1,922 motorcyclists who lost their lives were not wearing a helmet.

- When choosing a helmet, look for a DOT sticker; this guarantees it meets safety standards set by law.

- The National Traffic Safety Administration says non-motorcycle drivers are more likely to cause an accident than a driver on a bike.

- Helmets are estimated to be 37 percent effective in preventing fatal injuries for operators and 41 percent of passengers.

- Headgear is thought to have saved an estimated 1,772 lives in 2015.

- Never buy a used helmet as you don't know its history. Once it has been involved in an accident, it should be discarded.

- Super sport bikes have driver death rates about four times that of cruisers or standard bikes.

