

# Motorcycle

## GUIDE



# Smart Accessories

Safety and technology go hand in hand to create a more secure ride on your motorcycle. Even if you have taken the proper training, practice defensive driving and ensure your bike is road ready, you should still consider adding some effective safety accessories to your ride.

## SMART HELMET

An awesome way to stay safe in style is with a connected helmet. With a little research, you can find an approved safety unit with capabilities to document adventures with an on-board camera, utilize noise-canceling features and even connect to a smartphone for hands-free calling.

While the bells and whistles of smart helmets are appealing, the most important factor in your search is that it is approved to the DOT FMVSS 218 standard. This rating designates that all models are built to apply with The Federal Government's Department of Transportation regulations.

## REARVIEW CAMERA

Backup cameras have become a staple in passenger vehicles. Have you considered upgrading your bike with the same innovative feature? Installation is relatively affordable at your preferred service center.

When looking for a model to add to your bike, consider features like night vision, waterproofing and a monitor large enough to provide a clear view of what's happening behind you.

## GPS NAVIGATOR

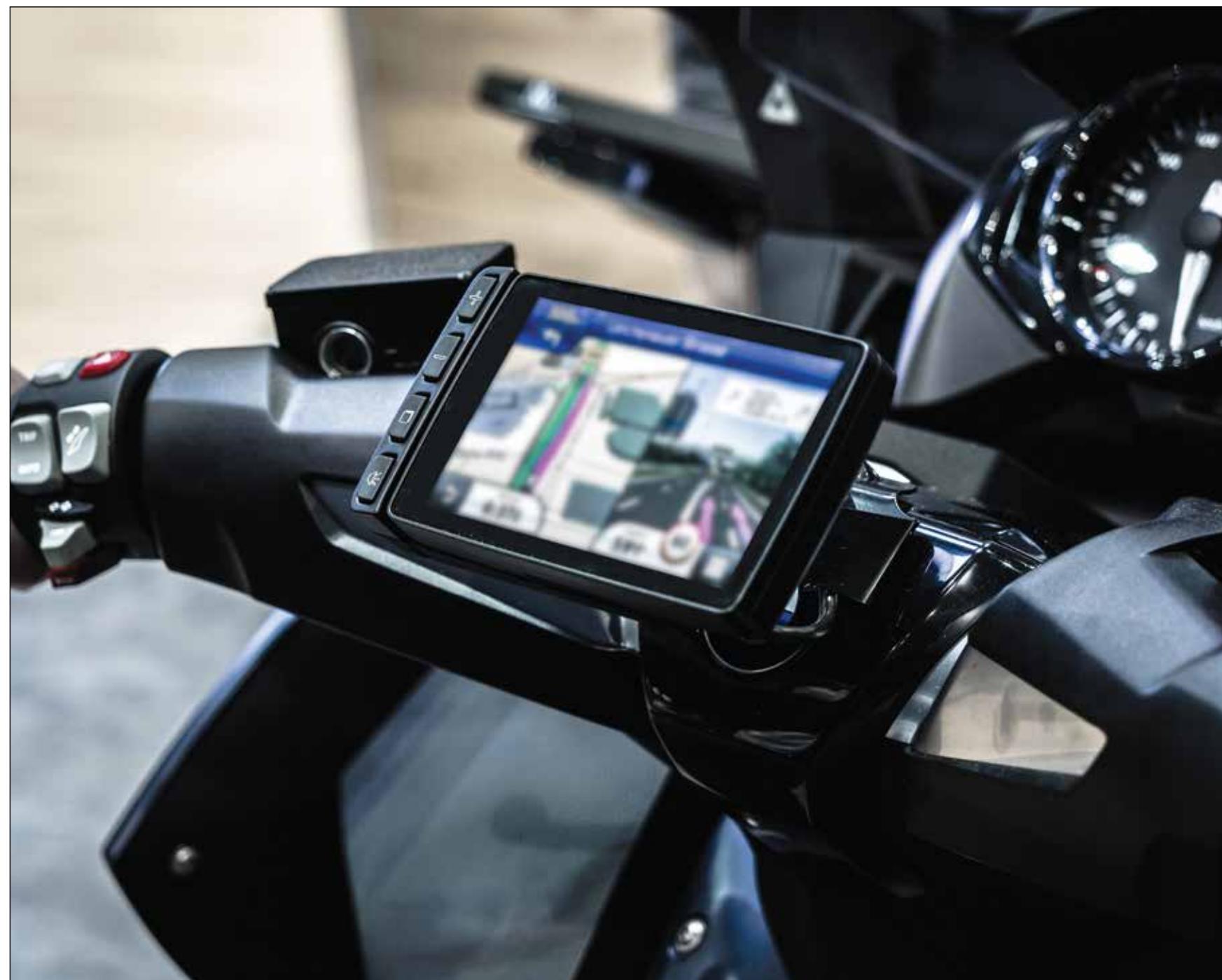
Having GPS installed on your bike allows for incredible adventures to areas with which you might not be familiar. You won't fear becoming lost or be required to pull over and check your location on a smartphone or physical map.

It's important to use a dedicated-motorcycle system as they are more durable than a unit meant for the interior of a vehicle. Make sure to check its ability to endure vibrations from the engine, differing temperatures and exposure to water.

## BUILT-IN AIRBAG

To add even more safety features to your equipment list, invest in a motorcycle jacket with an on-board airbag system. Today's options are much more comfortable, stylish and innovative than their bulky predecessors.

Most work with a non-intrusive lanyard that connects a biker to their machine. If a rider is thrown from the bike, the system kicks in and deploys a cushion to act as a splint keeping the spine and neck immobile to lessen the impact of an accident.


© ADOBE STOCK

# Common Accident Causes

Traveling the highways from the seat of a bike provides a unique perspective of scenic routes. However, extreme caution should be practiced because when accidents occur, the results can be much more severe for riders.

The National Highway Traffic Association offers these startling statistics to help understand the risks associated with motorcycle riding.

- More than 80 percent of all reported motorcycle crashes result in injury or death to the rider or passenger;
- In 2016, motorcyclist deaths occurred 28 times more frequently than fatalities in other vehicles.
- Percentage of DOT-compliant motorcycle helmet use was only 65.2 in 2017.

Whether you're a seasoned rider or just entering the journey of biking, learn how to avoid the common causes of accidents to riders.

## ROAD OBSTRUCTIONS ON BLIND CORNERS

Numerous highways offer bikers exhilarating twists and turns that make riding challenging and exciting. Speeding around blind corners, however, can also introduce dangerous results.

Elements such as loose gravel or sand on the road can be enough to throw your motorcycle's tires off track and into a wipeout. The best way to avoid becoming a victim of a fall is to ride at a pace that allows for an efficient reaction time.



© ADOBE STOCK

It is a good practice to take a wide turn when coming around corners, allowing for vision of the entire roadway. Travel at speeds where you can manage an emergency plan to avoid oncoming obstructions.

## SLIPPERY CONDITIONS

It's never ideal to travel in rainy or snowy conditions, but especially on cross-country trips, it's likely you will

encounter the wet stuff. Slippery roadways are another dangerous condition that often leads to disaster.

If you find yourself forced to travel through a downpour, do so at a manageable pace to keep your bike upright. Tires in good condition can be a huge advantage in keeping traction on slick pavement. Make sure they have plenty of tread left before taking off on an excursion.

## OTHER VEHICLES

Another dangerous factor on the roads for motorcycles is other drivers. You can keep yourself safe by ensuring all lights are working to remain visible, being aware of your surroundings and driving defensively.

Remember to keep enough space between yourself and other drivers in case you need to make a quick reaction.



© ADOBE STOCK

# Before your First Ride

As temperatures rise across the country, motorcyclists everywhere prepare for another season of adventure. A biking excursion can take a wrong turn if your machine isn't properly prepped after being in storage over the winter.

Your best companion for spring preparation is the owner's or service manual for your motorcycle. It may point out specific instructions that go

beyond general maintenance. You also may discover specialty tools to perform certain tasks if you decide to tackle the project yourself.

Read on for some other ways to fine tune your machine before hitting the open road.

## CHECK ALL BULBS

One considerable safety feature on all motorcycles is properly working lights. Take your time and inspect each filament to ensure they are working efficiently. While the headlights are important, don't forget to check for the functionality of brake lights, turn signals and hazards.

Making sure everything is well-lit helps you remain visible to other drivers and let them know your intentions.

## TIRE INTEGRITY

It is imperative that a machine's tires are in peak condition. Don't risk your safety and that of others to dry rotting or rubber that is below its required tread, as an unexpected blowout can occur.

These are some tips on how to check your tires for signs of wear and replacement from the Motorcycle Industry Council.

- Use a gauge to measure the amount of air in each tire. Pay attention to the recommended levels. Your bike may have different requirements depending on whether you're riding solo or with passengers.

- Measure tread with a depth gauge to ensure there are efficient levels of rubber to gain traction on the road.

Generally, 1/32 inch of tread will expose wear bars, demanding a replacement.

- Analyze the surface of your tires to check for evidence of uneven wear, cuts, embedded objects or bulges.

## PROFESSIONAL INSPECTION

If you are uncomfortable performing spring maintenance on your motorcycle, don't hesitate to make an appointment at a local service center. The technicians there are proficient in analyzing and replacing fluids that may contaminate important components and give you peace of mind that everything is in working order. Don't wait until the last minute to make an appointment as shops will see an increase in business as the temperatures rise.

# Buying a Long-Distance Bike

There are many different types of motorcycles available for riders. If you are in the market for a machine for long-distance travel, a touring model is your best companion. They generally feature ample-storage space and are loaded with innovative features.

For first-time motorcycle owners, a touring bike isn't the best training option. Because they are intended for long and comfortable hauls, their large stature may be intimidating to an amateur. Another disadvantage many users notice is their poor handling and speed compared to other street bikes.

If the capabilities of a travel bike fit your needs and expectations, you should consider these factors before committing to the investment.

## NEW OR USED?

When on a budget, a used motorcycle can be an appealing option. However, because of the dangers associated with biking, it's imperative you trust the seller.

When purchasing a used bike, make sure to research its history. Ask the dealer for a copy of its VIN report, where you may discover accidents, significant repairs and other major incidents it was involved in. You should also inquire about pre-owned guarantees and any warranty programs available.

While brand new bikes are significantly more expensive, being the first


© ADOBE STOCK

owner of a machine is comforting. You will be in total control of performing timely maintenance and not worrying that a major component may fail due to negligence. Another perk is that most new bikes can be customized and carry a manufacturer warranty.

## REQUIRED FEATURES

When shopping for a touring motorcycle, it's a good idea to have a

budget in place. Since they are intended for long hauls, enticing features are available to add comfort and functionality to the machines.

Consider which add-ons are most important. Here are a few that may be worth the extra money.

- On-board GPS and satellite radios;
- Heated seats and extra-luggage space; and
- Additional fuel space and ABS

braking capability.

## ON- OR OFF-ROAD

You may find these models with strict street-only tendencies or units that can travel off the beaten path.

When weighing the options, consider where you intend to travel and for what durations. Don't find yourself suffering from buyer's remorse because your motorcycle cannot take you to the places you want to go.

# Motorcycle Camping

An aspect that attracts many people to motorcycles is having an easy and affordable way to travel the highways. Planning a road trip can be difficult as you must book hotels or other rest stops to stay along the way. While preparing for a cross-country voyage, consider bringing your camping supplies to get in tune with nature.

If tent camping isn't your cup of tea, you might find refuge in investing in a camper that's intended to be pulled behind a motorcycle. These additions make great companions at any campsite and offer extra interior space for your belongings.

Before making a purchase, ensure with a sale's professional that your bike has the capabilities to safely pull the extra weight.

For those who do intend to set up makeshift campsites and truly rough it along their path through the country, remember these tips from the iconic Harley Davidson Motorcycles group.

## PACKING SAFELY

When stocking your bike with camping essentials, pay attention to your ride's center of gravity. Make sure you pack heavier items lower on the machine and remain balanced on each side. Extra storage space can be achieved by installing a backrest, but the new aerodynamics may impact fuel economy, so keep an eye on your



© ADOBE STOCK

gauge.

When strapping your luggage in with heavy-duty ratchet straps, ensure all material is free from exhaust components.

## PLAN MEALS

It's important to plan for preparing meals in the outdoors. You can find portable cooking units that operate on a variety of fuels.

If you will be camping for a substantial amount of time, it isn't feasible to bring food for the entire trip. Analyze your route and plan to stop by local markets to reload.

## EMERGENCY ITEMS

Some bikes may not be fitted with charging capabilities for your phone. It's imperative your battery is full in case of emergencies. You can visit a

local service center to have a charger point installed or plan to bring a solar port.

Other essentials you need to remain safe include flashlights, first-aid kits, tools for your bike and a durable tow rope.

With the right gear and proper packing methods, you can truly enjoy many sights our country has to offer both on and off the road.

# Hauling your Bike

Of course, the most exciting way to get your motorcycle to its destination is behind the handlebars, but that isn't always feasible. Whether you are moving to a new location or experience a breakdown, sometimes hauling it is the only option.

It should be done with extreme caution as improper towing methods can lead to serious damage to your investment.

Most commercial shippers have the same requirements and will ensure the bike has been emptied before transportation. If you are unsure how to drain your machine, these professional transporters may perform the process for a fee.

If you plan to haul a machine by yourself, check with your insurance agent about their policies regarding fluids. To follow their policies, some require the flammable liquids to be evacuated before hauling. Here are some tips to safely haul your motorcycle in different types of transport.

## PICK-UP TRUCK

Sometimes, a trailer isn't readily available to haul your bike. Luckily, the move can be safely performed from the bed of a pickup, but you will need extra tools.

The first item on your list should be a durable bike ramp. Use a tie-down to secure it to the open tailgate and ask a friend to push while another person steers from the handlebars.

Make sure to communicate with your loading partner to ensure the weight of the motorcycle isn't too



CATHY/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

heavy, resulting in it rolling down the ramp. This could put the person behind the bike at serious risk of injury.

Once in the bed, engage the kickstand and secure a wheel chock behind the tire. Next aim for 45-degree angles when anchoring the bike to tie-down points.

You should have at least two straps in front and two in the back to ensure a tight hold.

Avoid using weak components like

mufflers or mirrors as anchors, as handlebars and parts of the frame are more secure.

## ENCLOSED TRAILER

Especially for long trips, the preferred hauler is an enclosed trailer. This vehicle keeps your motorcycle out of elements like rain or snow that you may travel through. Before bringing your bike onboard, make sure the trailer is level while hitched to your tow vehicle.

Position your bike so its front wheel is secured by a wheel chock and the kickstand is engaged.

You should then anchor it with tie-down straps and heavy-duty D rings mounted both to the front and rear of your motorcycle. Ratchet the hold downs until there is zero slack left.

However, you are hauling your motorcycle, it's good insurance to inspect its security periodically throughout the trip.

# Safety in Adverse Weather

Cold weather is another enemy to motorcycle enthusiasts. Elements like snow or ice can seriously cripple your experience and introduce dangerous situations. While it's easy to dismiss a time when you find yourself biking in winter weather, forecasts can be unpredictable, especially if you intend to make a cross-country trek.

## STAYING SAFE IN THE RAIN

Being caught in the rain isn't only dangerous because of the diminished view you may have of the highway. There are other hazards you should be on the lookout for.

Concrete, manhole covers, and railroad crossings can become slippery during rainfall. Watch for puddles, potholes and oil spills that can cause disastrous results.

When you find yourself in an area where heavy rain is imminent, do your best to get off the road and wait out the weather in a dry place. However, if shelter isn't available, here are some tips you should utilize, as recommended by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation.

- **Take it slow.** It's important to travel with extreme caution. Be easy on your brakes and throttle to avoid losing control. During turns, it's a good idea to release the throttle and coast until the corner is completed;

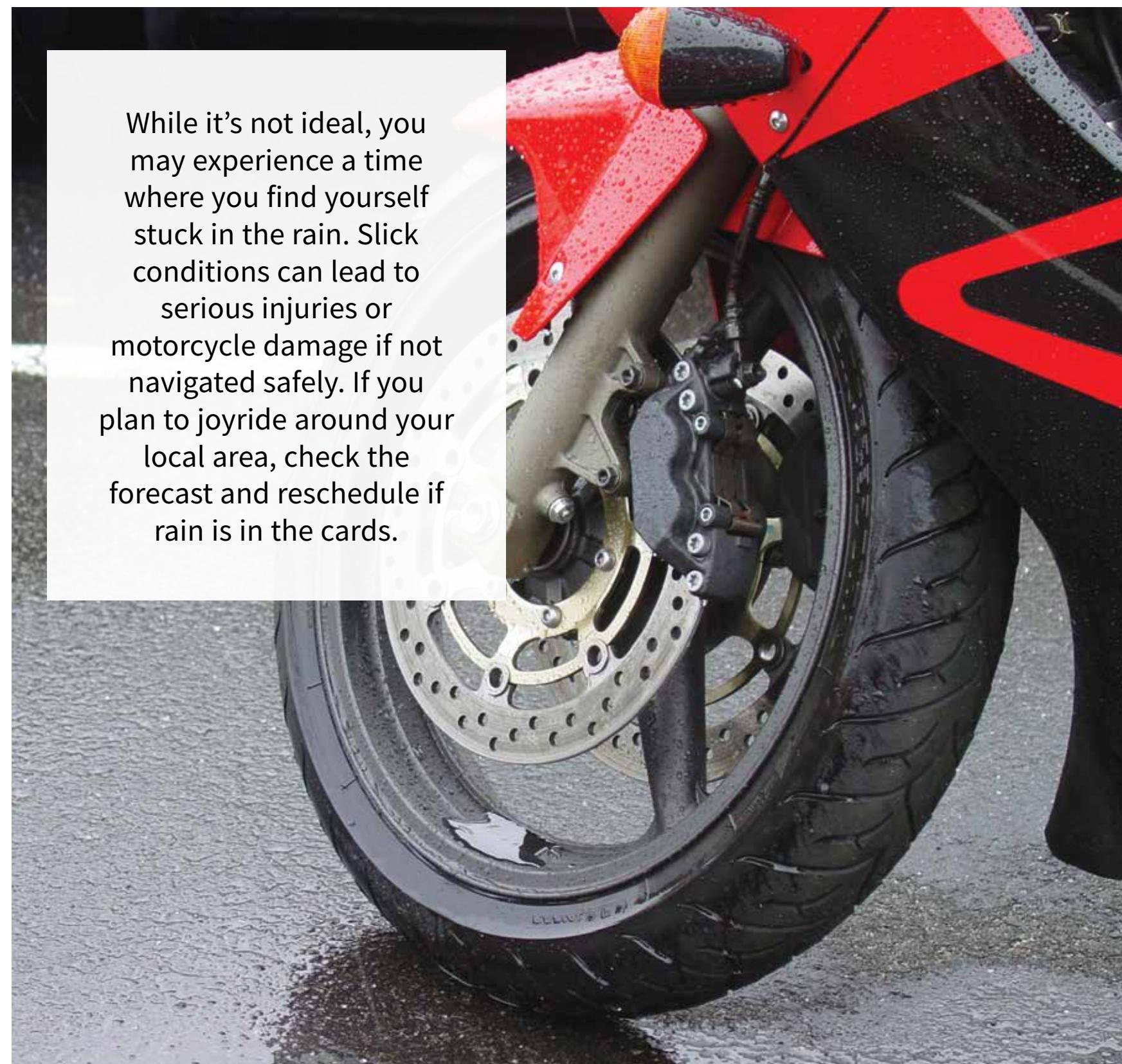
- **Be mindful of reaction time.** Panic stops and quick aversions can lead to serious accidents. Allow yourself plenty of space between other vehicles and develop an emergency plan in case they make an unexpected move.

Wet-weather driving also requires upgraded tires. Talk to the expert at your repair shop for the best rubber to keep traction if your riding plans are often interrupted by slick roadways.

## COLD WEATHER DANGERS

If you plan to take a ride during

While it's not ideal, you may experience a time where you find yourself stuck in the rain. Slick conditions can lead to serious injuries or motorcycle damage if not navigated safely. If you plan to joyride around your local area, check the forecast and reschedule if rain is in the cards.



© ADOBE STOCK

cold-weather conditions, it's imperative to dress for the temperatures. Make sure your hands and feet are warm as they are responsible for operating the

machine safely.

You should also invest in windproof clothing and an insulating material to keep yourself comfortable. Riding a

bike with a windshield can also provide a protective barrier between you and the frigid temperatures. Consider installing one if needed.