



A GUIDE TO Motorcycles

The Appeal of Motorcycles

Unless you've spent a Saturday afternoon zipping down the road on a motorcycle, you may not truly understand the appeal of America's favorite two-wheeler.

Motorcycle riding is a pastime that only continues to gain popularity throughout the world. The power, speed and freedom afforded by one have helped drive the rise in biking fandom.

While motorcycles are exciting to ride, they also come with some inherent dangers. Riding them requires sharp skills and quick reflexes, keeping you even more connected to the road and those around you.

With some simple safety tips and a deep understanding of how your machine operates, you can enjoy decades of fun on the road.

FREEDOM

One of the main reasons motorcycles are so attractive to riders is the freedom associated with taking one on the open road.

With no roof over your head, you are one with nature and the surrounding countryside.

Being on two wheels gives you a feeling of agility and flexibility not found in many four-wheeled alternatives. The driving experience is like no other, truly unique to other vehicles on the road.

THE CAMARADERIE

Motorcycle enthusiasts are a special breed who routinely use their bikes as a way to support local charities and grow positive relationships with fellow riders.

If you're looking for ways to connect with more people, joining the motorcycle culture can help you achieve this.

Active organizations and online forums are dedicated to all things motorcycle, helping you find like-minded riders to discuss all things motorcycle.

FUEL EFFICIENCY

There are many environmental benefits of motorcycles, as well. Average mid-size motorcycles pump out about 40 miles per gallon, while some lighter weight models can perform well above the 50-mile benchmark.

In a time when gas prices are unpredictable, having an efficient option in your garage can only benefit your billfold.

Chat with your dealer before purchasing your next motorcycle to see your options in this important category.



How to Buy a Motorcycle

Buying a new or used motorcycle is essentially like buying a car. You can expect to go through negotiations and test drives before signing your name on the final papers.

But before you take your next motorcycle off the lot, you'll need to ask yourself some questions about what you're looking in your new bike.

First of all, where will you be doing most of your riding? If you find yourself most frequently on the highway, a heavier motorcycle that can stand up well against passing semis may be for you.

Other points to consider include whether or not you'll be carrying passengers and what types of features you'd like to add. Speak to other riders to find out the pros and cons of different styles before choosing your next bike.

DON'T FORGET THE TEST DRIVE

Even if this isn't your first motorcycle purchase, one of the most important aspects of the transaction process is taking a test drive. Consider these key indicators when trying to make your final decision:

- Your feet can easily touch the ground while you're seated.
- The seat is comfortable.
- The motorcycle is easy to stop, accelerate and slow down.
- The bike smoothly handles corners.

Buying used from an individual requires extra diligence on your part. Be sure to carefully inspect the condition of the bike and all of its key parts, including tires, brakes and turn signals. Also ask for any documented mechanical issues from the past, as well as any maintenance records.

BE STREET LEGAL

Just like a car purchase, you will be required to title and register your new motorcycle before hitting the road. This involves completing the registration process with your state's Department of Motor Vehicles.

Professional dealers will help you complete the necessary paperwork. If you're buying used from an individual, you will be required to initiate contact with your local DMV to coordinate the paperwork.

Always be wary of an individual seller who cannot provide you a copy of the title and registration. This could be a signal that the bike is stolen, so consider taking your business elsewhere.



If You Love It, Lock It Up

Unfortunately for motorcycle owners, bikes make for prized possessions of opportunistic thieves. More than 46,000 thefts occur every year, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

Keeping your bike locked when you park it is one of the best ways to prevent thefts. Consider using a strong, motorcycle U-bolt to chain your bike to a solid object. The thicker the chain the better to stand up to a determined thief with bolt-cutters.

You can thread the lock through your helmet or other gear too, helping you keep your hands free while you're taking a break from riding.

And while locking your bike is effective, you can take other simple steps to keep your bike secure.

ALARMS

Alarms are effective in startling any would-be thief, and combining an alarm with a lock gives you double protection.

The best types of alarms are hidden out of view, so consider attaching your alarm under your bike cover. Your alarm will sound the instant someone starts tampering with your cover.

Thanks to technology, many of today's alarm systems can be tied into your smartphone. The benefit here is if someone sets off your alarm while you're blocks away. You will receive notification and be able to alert fellow riders or the authorities of your situation.



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AT HOME

Just because your bike is stored in your garage or shed doesn't mean it's safe. Use your lock and alarm at home the same way you use it in public.

A security system for your home that includes your garage also is a smart investment, especially if you hear of theft issues in your area. Again, many mobile applica-

tions make it possible to monitor your home — and your bike — while you're away on a trip.

Also consider where you park your motorcycle in the

garage.

Use other vehicles as obstacles to beef up your security, making it hard for a thief to maneuver your bike out of the garage.

Motorcycles and Technology

Just as technology continues to change the game in car and truck manufacturing, it is making similar strides in the world of motorcycles.

Many of the most innovative changes being developed are centered around rider safety. Advancements in airbag technology, lighting and communications systems continue to be tested and implemented in new models.

The driving force behind the changes is improving the riding experience while also cutting down on the number of annual motorcyclist deaths — 4,000 according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

BLUETOOTH-ENABLED RIDING

Some of the biggest changes in motorcycle manufacturing are in the Bluetooth-enabled systems onboard.

Helmets are being predesigned to accept Bluetooth communication devices, making it easy to communicate safely with other riders in your group. These systems also are effective in delivering crystal-clear audio quality, helping you pick up fuel alerts or your favorite song against highway wind noise.

Riding gloves that provide fingertip control of your Bluetooth headsets and cameras also are available. And some communicators let you record audio in conjunction with video to capture your favorite riding experiences from your helmet or mounted camera.

ANTI-LOCK BRAKING

Motorcycles haven't always come equipped with ABS capabilities. Research shows how important the technology is to rider safety.

Recent tests by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that bikers with ABS on their motorcy-



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cles were 37 percent less likely to be involved in fatal motorcycle crashes.

Most major manufacturers offer ABS as standard now, or at least as an option for safety-minded riders.

LIGHTING

Adaptive headlights are shining the

way to increased biker safety. This type of lighting tilts in conjunction with a bike's lean angle, helping illuminate the most critical areas of the road during a nighttime ride.

LED brake lights also are being adapted for motorcyclists, who sometimes are required to use their brakes

due to the motorcycle's rapid deceleration abilities. This can lead to safety issues if the driver of a car behind them doesn't realize their intention to brake.

Testing is underway for devices that light up when the bike begins to slow, even if the biker is not applying the brakes.

Safe Riding Tips

Whether you're a new, experienced or returning rider, the power of today's motorcycles should be respected.

That means taking precautions to ensure the safety of yourself and those who are sharing the road. These precautions can range from wearing the proper gear to taking the latest safety training from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation or similar organization.

How you prepare yourself for trips says a lot about how committed you are to a safe experience. Are you quick to grab the keys and hit the road? Or are you more apt to plan for inclement weather, study the route to your destination and pack extra safety gear?

The work you put in before you mount your bike can help improve your odds of returning home safely.

NEW RIDER TIPS

When shopping for a new bike, know what you're getting into and never buy more than you can handle. How do you know how much you can handle? Take a test drive. Ask around. Do some research on which type of bike will fit your needs.

Just like any other big purchase, read buyer reviews and testimonials on online forums or manufacturer websites. The more you know about what you want in a bike, the smarter purchase you will end up making.

USE YOUR HEAD

By now, motorcyclists know the risks associated with not wearing

a helmet.

Government studies show that riders without a helmet are 40 percent more likely to suffer a fatal head injury in a crash and are three times more likely to suffer brain injuries than those with helmets.

When Texas and Arkansas repealed their helmet laws, they saw a 31- and 21-percent increase in motorcycle fatalities, respectively, according to Consumer Reports.

OTHER TIPS

Here are some additional quick tips from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation:

- Remember that motorists often have trouble seeing motorcycles and reacting in time.
- Make sure your headlight works and is on day and night.
- Use reflective strips or decals on your clothing and on your motorcycle.
- Be aware of the blind spots cars and trucks have.
- Flash your brake light when you are slowing down and before stopping.
- If a motorist doesn't see you, don't be afraid to use your horn.
- Wear a quality helmet and eye protection.
- Wear bright clothing and a light-colored helmet.
- Wear leather or other thick, protective clothing.
- Choose long sleeves, long pants, over-the-ankle boots and gloves.



Invest in Your Gear

The last thing you want to do after plunking down cash on a new bike is invest in expensive gear. But keep enough in your budget for critical items that can keep you protected and comfortable on the road.

Heavy-duty gear like a leather jacket, reinforced helmet and robust sunglasses can be your last line of defense in an accident.

If you decide to skimp on the quality, you may be risking greater injury in the unfortunate case of a crash.

HELMETS

The most essential riding gear starts here. Not only is riding helmetless illegal in some areas — many states have implemented universal helmet laws — but it can be a reckless choice when it comes to protecting your personal safety.

Helmet options range from full-face varieties to half-helmets with muzzles. Try on a few before making your purchase, making sure to consider the overall weight of the helmet and maneuverability of your head while wearing it.

TREAT YOUR FEET

Helmet? Check. Thick riding jacket? Check. Fancy sunglasses and bandanna? Check.

Before you think your riding gear checklist is complete, don't forget your feet. Regular tennis shoes or flip-flops are not appropriate footwear for a ride of any distance.

Your feet serve as your anchors, helping you keep balanced both in motion and at stoplights. Treat them with

a pair of high-quality motorcycle boots.

Boots with a small heel can help your feet keep a better grip on your bike's pegs, while reinforcements in the shin, ankle and calf areas can help keep your entire lower body comfortable during a ride.

GET A GRIP

Your hands are just as important as your feet. And just like you support your feet with a solid pair of riding boots, your hands deserve the luxury that sturdy gloves provide.

Gloves keep your grip strong, even during inclement weather. Without them your hands may slip during the rain or get sweaty during rides on hot days. Both can be a safety hazard.

In the case of a crash, your gloves can protect your hands and body from serious injury. It's a natural response to extend your hands while you're falling. Gloves will protect your hands in an accident situation.

Look for gloves that cover and protect your palms, fingers, wrists and knuckles. And don't buy them without first trying them on. What's the point of spending \$20 on a nice pair of gloves if you get them home to find they're uncomfortable on your hands?



Have a Safe Trip

Are you planning your next American road trip by bike? Between the hotel reservations and route planning, make sure to devote some time to packing the items you'll need for a safe, enjoyable trip.

This process starts with knowing your machine from the inside out.

Are there special tools required for mechanical repairs that you may need in the middle of nowhere? Is there a spot on your bike that has been giving you trouble lately — something simple to fix, such as a blown headlight bulb or shorted-out electrical relay?

Knowing which kind of mechanical issues you could face on the road is the first step. Being prepared to handle them on your own with the right backup parts and tools is up to you.

FLAT TIRE REPAIR

Maintenance-wise, the most likely hiccup to occur during your travels may be a flat tire. Incurring a flat on a busy highway can lead to serious injuries, as can trying to repair a tire in the dead of night.

A tire repair kit with extra plugs and a small pump is an essential for any trip. Don't forget a flashlight and air pressure gauge to make sure you repair your tire safely and correctly.

WHAT TO TAKE

Even if you're an experienced rider, making a list never hurts when it comes to being as prepared as possible. Visualize different situations occurring on your trip as a test to check if you're forgetting anything. These can include a flat tire and inclement weather.

Add these common items to your own list:

- U-Lock and other theft-prevention items;
- Bike cover; and
- Extra ignition key.

PREPARE FOR THE WEATHER

The farther you travel, the better chance you will run into heavy rain or a thunderstorm. Large temperature swings also are possible, depending on which areas of the country and during what season you're traveling.

Carrying tons of extra gear isn't always feasible when you're trying to pack lightly. Fortunately, many clothing options can work well in both colder and warmer temperatures. Jackets with adjustable vents and removable lining, for example, can keep you comfortable in a variety of weather conditions.

And don't forget the extra gloves. Your fingers will thank you later.

