

## Long-distance motorcycle touring tips: Ride smarter, not harder

1. Adjust your suspension. Especially if you are traveling with a passenger and you've added a lot of weight with luggage, check the sag on the suspension. Make sure to balance your weight on both sides (saddlebags).
2. Pack washables. Laundry mats are easy to find, within hotels, camping grounds or in the local communities.
3. Pack travel size toiletries and leave the hair dryer at home.
4. Water is key to keeping dehydration at bay. Keep water handy, even in cool weather.
5. Plan stops ahead of time to make sure any amenities you might need, like food or a hotel, are near the place you plan to stay the night.
6. Take time to stop and enjoy what you're doing. Most of us have a laundry list of "to-dos." Don't let your ride be just another thing to get done. It really is a marathon, not a sprint. High speeds don't help you too much unless you're able to sustain them, and if you do, your gas mileage and range will suffer.
7. A little nap can be all you need to recharge your batteries. Riding tired is dangerous. Catnaps count. If you're trying to ride big mileage in little time, a couple of short half-hour naps will often get you right mentally.
8. Treat yourself. The more miles you're doing, the less you'll want to set up camp, cook, etc. Unless you're Iron Butting, the harder you ride, the less hard you should be working on the other stuff (with some exceptions). In that vein, if you're camping each night, plan on getting off the bike a bit earlier in the evening and losing a few hours to camp prep.
9. Avoid the rush. Work your route so you're not in urban areas during peak commute times. All those suckers have to go to work... don't join them if you don't have to!
10. Plan your gas stops. Alternatively, have a second fuel container on board.
11. Check your bike out. Every morning is a good starting point. Chain lubing, fastener checking, and tire examination all can keep you safe.
12. Flat tires happen. A small repair kit and an inflation tool take up little space. If you're doing a really big run and you're likely to need tires, set that up with a shop beforehand. Same with oil changes and such. It's best to handle maintenance before you go, but if you can't, schedule it in to minimize down time.

13. Stop and take a break. Just get off the bike and stretch and give your butt a rest every now and again.
14. Test pack. Unless you're taking exactly the same things on exactly the same bike as your last trip (and that one went well), pack everything on your motorcycle before departure to make sure it fits and attaches securely.
15. Map up. If you're traveling off the beaten path and you plan to use your smartphone for navigation assistance, download maps in advance for remote areas where you may not have cell service. Your phone's GPS will still locate you, but without a cell tower in range, your phone won't be able to download a map to show your position.

Remember: you are a stranger. Away from home, vigilance must stay high to balance your lack of local knowledge, including road conditions and potentially hazardous traffic areas. Relax and enjoy the sights, but maintain your usual level of alertness.

Of course, this list isn't comprehensive, if you have a few touring tips of your own that we could share, let us know.