

33 Secrets For Smart Touring Share

 www.americanmotorcyclist.com/Riding/Street/Resources/33SecretsForSmartTouring.aspx

There's nothing like the feeling of loading up and heading out on a big motorcycle trip.

And there's nothing like the security of knowing you're prepared for life on the road.

It can take years to develop that knowledge through trial and error. So we've devised a shortcut. We've asked AMA staff members to share with you the experience they've accumulated over decades on the road.



What you'll find here isn't a comprehensive collection of touring knowledge. Instead, here are 33 insider tips—useful suggestions that have made our tours more organized and more fun. We guarantee you'll learn something.

1. Eat at weird times. Everyone and their dog eats around 8 a.m., noon and 6 p.m. To get in and out of restaurants in a hurry, don't be hungry then.
2. A short metal cable with loops on both ends (like those made to keep people from stealing bicycle seats) is perfect for securing a jacket and helmet to your bike's helmet lock.
3. Carry a spare key. Hide it somewhere on your bike with a zip-tie or duct tape, or better yet, trade spare keys with a traveling companion.
4. Portable weather radios are now in the \$20 range, and the first time one saves you from running right into a massive storm, you'll wonder why you ever traveled without one. Find one at accessory companies like Aerostich or Radio Shack.
5. On high-mileage days, you'll feel a lot better if you carry eyedrops and use them every time you stop for gas.
6. If you're nearing the end of your riding day and want to set yourself up for a quick getaway in the morning, consider riding to the far side of the next city you reach before you stop for the night, eliminating urban traffic the next morning.
7. Take a tip from off-road riders: carry a backpack hydration system so you can drink while you ride. A must for arid weather.
8. Going on a long, complex trip? Keep yourself organized with the envelope system. Before you leave, prepare one envelope for each day on the road. Mark the dates and locations on the outside, then stuff things like hotel reservation info and lists of things to see inside. Instead of juggling your entire stack of literature to find the information you need, you can just open up that day's envelope.
9. A simple map case attached to your bike's tank (we've used a Rev-Pak version that has been available through www.whitehorsepress.com for years) can keep you on course without the bulk of a tankbag.
10. Keep your stuff dry in saddlebags by using trash compactor bags as waterproof barriers. They're thicker and more durable than standard garbage bags.
11. Use earplugs to help reduce wind noise. You can get them from most mail-order shops or dealers, or in bulk from safety-equipment supply houses.
12. Don't forget that pack-and-ship places are just about everywhere these days. They're perfect when you spot

that antique umbrella stand you're dying to buy hundreds of miles from home.

13. Don't forget a small towel or rag for wiping dew off seats, windshields and mirrors, and even for doing a quick whole-bike cleanup. Synthetic chamois cloths work particularly well.
14. Pack extra bungees and zip-ties. 'Nuff said.
15. Go ahead, buy that GPS you've always wanted. They're perfect not only for finding yourself, but also for allowing you the freedom to get lost in the first place.
16. You've heard it a million times, but we'll say it again: look over your bike carefully every morning on the road. Checking the simple stuff—air pressure, oil level, loose or missing fasteners—can save you from big trouble.
17. Sign up for AMA Roadside Assistance. To sign up, call the AMA at: (614) 856-1900.
18. Stash a little hidden cash somewhere on the bike or on you, so you can make something happen when all else fails.
19. Before you take off from the hotel or campground in the morning, double check every strap on tankbags or soft saddlebags, and every latch on hard luggage.
20. Wear a dog-tag with your name and contact info, especially if you're riding alone. You can get them lots of places, including your local army surplus store.
21. Take a look back at where you were parked every time you leave someplace. You'd be amazed at what you find.
22. A cellphone can be a lifesaver in an emergency. You can dial 911 for help anywhere you find cell service, but you'll need to tell a dispatcher where you are. Keep track of route numbers, interstate exits, towns you've passed, mileposts—anything that can save emergency officials time in getting to you.
23. Good motorcycle gear really is worth it. Waterproof, breathable linings in boots and jackets will transform the way you think about bad weather. A number of companies offer materials that work well, but always test your gear on a rainy day at home before facing a storm on the road.
24. Do routine maintenance at home with your bike's toolkit, so you're sure you have what you need along the side of the road.
25. On a long tour, plan for at least one day every week of doing nothing. Time is the ultimate luxury, and can mean the difference between a vacation and an endurance run.
26. Be realistic with your daily mileage. In really scenic areas, 150 miles may make a very full day. Don't assume you can achieve freeway mileage on good back roads.
27. Guidebooks can be invaluable, but these days, an internet search can add spice to your trip by revealing special-interest locations most books fail to include. One of the sites we've used is www.roadsideamerica.com. World's largest concrete bison, anyone?
28. It is possible to use a kit to make emergency repairs on tubeless or tube-type tires alongside the road. But before you count on this as your safety net, practice using the kit on an old tire in your garage.
29. A packable motorcycle cover not only keeps your bike clean and dry overnight, it also discourages thieves. And don't forget a stout lock of some kind for the bike itself.
30. If you can afford it and are short of time, you could always ship your bike somewhere cool and ride it back. Call the Federal Companies at (800) 747-4100, ext. 217 or 218, for details.
31. If you call a hotel—even if you're two blocks away—you can often get a better rate than if you just walk in. And if you have access to a computer, there are some spectacular Internet-only deals available these days. Either way, do yourself a favor and have a reservation by 4 p.m. You never know when a convention will take over your destination city. Remember that AMA members get a discount at several hotel chains including Choice Hotels (call 800-258-2847 or go to www.choicehotels.com, click on "Enter Special Rate ID" and use discount

code 00947556) and Motel 6 (call 800-4-MOTEL6 or go to www.motel6.com and use discount code CP540176).

32. A nap can do wonders on a long day.
33. If you're traveling east or west, schedule your breakfast or dinner times near sunrise or sunset so you don't have to stare into the sun when it's low on the horizon.