

Plan And Execute A Great Road Trip

Around The State Or Around The World, The Basics Are The Same

AMA Member Rashmi Tambe has gone from riding her sportbike locally, to riding across the country, to riding across Europe. Here are her best tips for traveling well:

- » A good ride starts long before you get the bike. Devour every source of information on your upcoming trip. Talk to other people who have ridden the planned route, either in person or on Internet forums. Pore over books and websites that describe the roads. Read up on the history of the places you'll pass through.
- » In the weeks before the trip, ride every opportunity that you can on home ground, including some day-long rides to remind yourself what being on the road is like. You'll iron out the kinks in your bike setup and gear choices.
- » Veteran tourers bring approximately the same amount of luggage for a three-day ride as for a month-long one. The basics remain the same—tools, spare parts, clothing, toiletries, maps, food and optional electronics. Try to fit everything into two saddlebags. For camping, add a dry bag with a tent, sleeping pad and cooking equipment. Get a hydration system.
- » Get a high-quality aftermarket toolkit to supplement the one that came with your bike. Bring brake and clutch levers and cables, headlamp bulbs, a tire patch kit, spare tubes and tire irons. Throw in zip ties, duct tape, safety wire, nitrile gloves, chain lube, and a multimeter.

- » Learn the basics of working on your bike before you hit the road, but don't let the lack of mechanical knowledge deter you from going far from home. Worst-case, you'll find people who can help you fix your bike, and parts to do it. Don't forget the manual.
- » Are you a gadget geek? A smartphone allows for micro-blogging on Facebook and Twitter. GPS is key. A netbook is good for basic computing. An mp3 player and a camera are good. Or leave it all at home, disconnect from the world and disappear.
- » Have adequate vehicle and health insurance. Think about getting temporary medical evacuation coverage. (AMA partner MASA is a great choice at www.MASAAmerica.com.) If you're riding to a foreign country, make sure you have a passport, visas, phrasebooks and foreign currency. Tell your credit card company your travel plans to prevent any holds on your account. Scan all your important paperwork and e-mail them to a friend in case you lose them on the road.
- » Eat regular meals instead of letting yourself get famished and then scouting around for a restaurant. Keep non-perishable emergency food like protein bars and cans of tuna at hand, but buy fresh fruit when it's available. Avoid dehydration by drinking and stocking up on water at every chance.
- » On the road, if it stops being fun, change what you're doing. This could mean slowing down and taking more breaks, cutting down your original route by half, splitting up with your companions, or other changes.
- » Plan on doing something while off the bike—reading, running, hiking, fishing, whatever it is that brings you joy.
- » A good attitude goes a long way—there will be days full of inclement weather, bad roads and mechanical difficulties. How you handle them will make the difference between a miserable journey and a memorable one.