

Pointers for Planning Your Next Motorcycle Trip, Part 2:

On the Road

By Robert Laford • GWRRA #126196 • Petersham, Massachusetts

Bob Laford belongs to both GWRRA and the Red Knights International Firefighters Motorcycle Club. He has presented a seminar on this topic at Americade and other rallies. In last month's Wing World, Bob talked about the importance of making sure you're ready to start a trip. What follows is Part Two of his series, offering insightful views on how to pre-plan for the more tangible, on-the-road situations, you may encounter during a long-distance motorcycle tour. Enjoy!

Continued from Wing World's January 2007 issue.

On the road

Daily Routine.

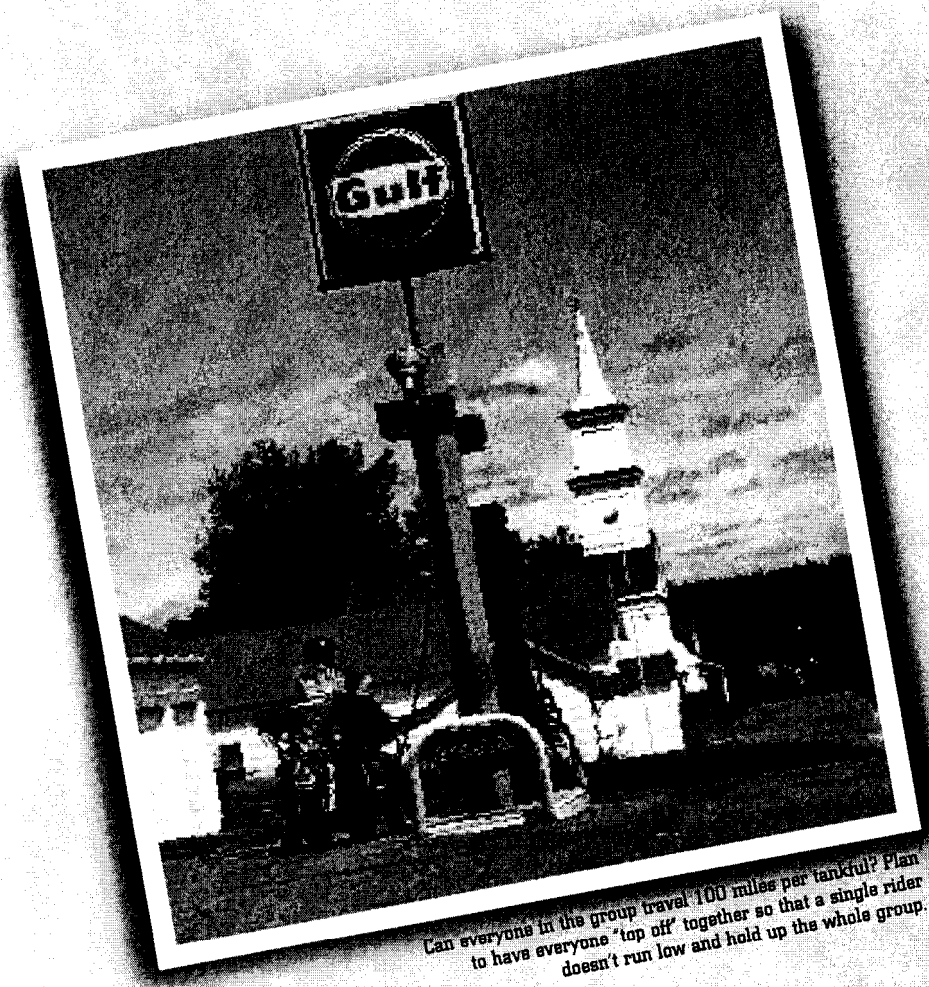
What's your routine? Knowing your daily routine brings you right back to the point we addressed last issue, be sure to choose the correct riding partners. Are you on the road at 5 a.m. while your riding partners don't recognize there are even two "seven o'clocks" during the day? That's definitely going to cause some stress during the trip.

Everyone should be comfortable with the routine. For instance, perhaps you like a quick breakfast bar and then, an hour down the road, a sit-down meal. Maybe your riding partners need a big breakfast before even jumping on their bikes. Do you refuel the bikes nightly before putting them to bed, or do you make that task your first stop each morning?

Pit Stops.

Whether you are on bikes with smaller fuel tanks and limited range, or on larger touring bikes with extended range, it's a good practice to stop every 100 miles or so. This gives everyone the opportunity to stop, stretch, "water out" and "water in," gas up and have a snack. A hundred miles is a good stopping point that can balance the difference between the larger capacity bikes and the smaller capacity bikes. And even those riding the big bikes may appreciate it.

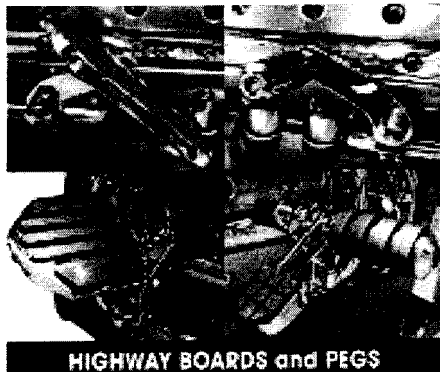
When you stop for fuel, *everyone* should get fuel, even if their bikes don't need it. That way, everyone is on the same fuel schedule. Otherwise, the unpleasant situation can arise



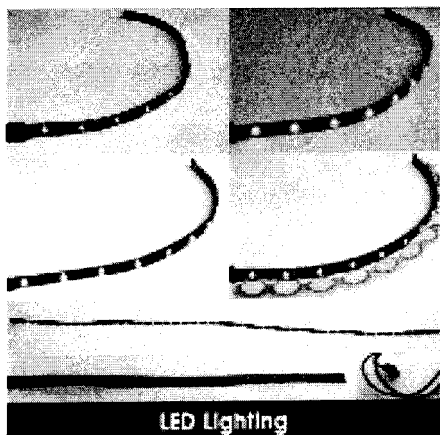
Can everyone in the group travel 100 miles per tankful? Plan to have everyone "top off" together so that a single rider doesn't run low and hold up the whole group.

TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR RIDE...

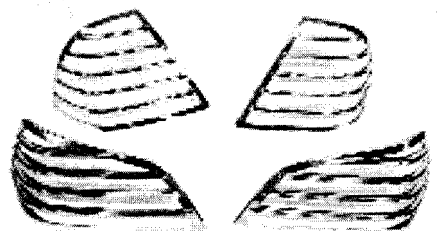
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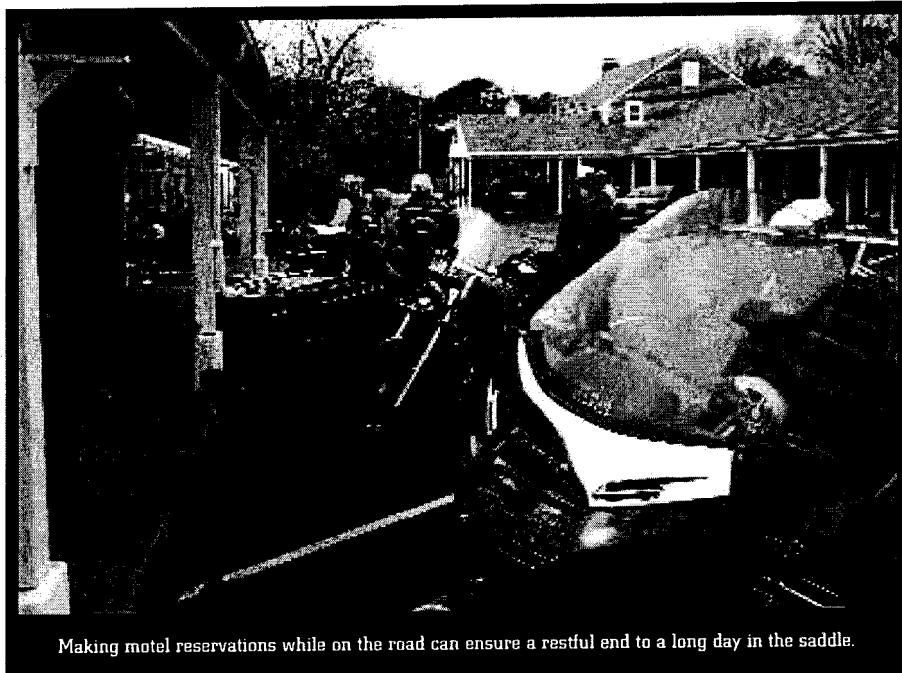
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Making motel reservations while on the road can ensure a restful end to a long day in the saddle.

when, 50 miles after the last stop, everyone must stop again for that one person who didn't bother to fuel up before.

It cannot be stressed enough that, at each stop, you need to take the time to hydrate yourself. Drinking plenty of water will ensure you won't get dehydrated on the road. So when you take on fuel for your bike, be sure to also take some on for yourself, and drink some water at each stop even if you're not thirsty!

And, always remember, make sure it's the gasoline nozzle—not the diesel nozzle—that you insert into your bike. (And, no, you would not be the first person to have done that!)

Road Construction.

Into every day, a little construction must fall. The prime riding season for motorcyclists is also the prime work season for those responsible for maintaining and building our roads. If you anticipate you'll be running into road construction each day, then you won't be as upset and frustrated when you come around the bend and see the sign! And, please, be patient with those construction sites workers—after all, you're much better off than they are. You're on your bike, enjoying a ride; they are at work, looking at you on your bike.

If the condition of the construction—or its apparent length in miles—is a concern to you, pull off to regroup and look at your maps. Take a few minutes away from the traffic and the conditions within the construction site to evaluate your schedule, your plans, and any alternative side roads or other nearby routes that may be available to you. Don't endanger yourself or your riding companions by trying to find those alternatives on your map *while*

you're maneuvering through the construction zone.

Weather.

A trip of any length will normally involve some inclement weather. The time of the year and your location's climate may also dictate what types you may encounter.

Even late into the spring season, there are areas of the country where wintry weather can surprise motorcyclists. For instance, as you ascend extremely high mountain ranges, you may find snow-covered roads or awake in the morning to find a fresh snowfall, even in the summertime. Make sure to have back-up plans available to hold you over until conditions improve in these types of areas.

We should routinely be prepared for rain and temperature extremes. It doesn't take many seconds to click by before a rider can go from a dry road to heavy rain and wind. Ask riders what they recommend for foul weather gear, and you'll come up with as many varieties and opinions as there are riders. Rain gear is an essential for a long trip, and riding in some form, and duration, of inclement weather will occur during almost any extended motorcycle vacation.

Consider your schedule and your days on the road. Can you plan an extra day or two to factor in bad weather? If heavy rains are expected all day, can you afford an extra day in the current location and move forward the next day? If your schedule doesn't permit extra travel days, there's not much choice on "Whether or not to ride in the weather"—you may *have* to ride, rain or not. What do you and your riding companions consider acceptable

riding conditions? Again, this type of discussion is needed *prior* to the start of your trip.

Also, if you're on the road and rain begins, consider stopping for a break even before your regularly scheduled stop. Taking a break affords riders the opportunity to don their rain gear. Don't forget, however, that it also allows the roads to get even wetter. But that's not necessarily a bad thing, because the initial minutes of a fresh rainstorm bring the oils and greases to the surface of roadways. By allowing break time during the first 30 to 45 minutes of a rainstorm, some of the oils will dissipate and be washed away with the rain.

Whether you decide to ride in the rain or not, riders must always be aware of changing road and traffic conditions. Even if your schedule doesn't allow for an extra day for inclement weather, you and your riding companions should not endanger your safety if conditions deteriorate beyond what you consider a safe riding point.

In addition to rain, cold temperatures—especially cold temperatures in conjunction with that rain—can lead to hypothermia. Hypothermia can set in fast and is extremely dangerous to riders because it so quickly diminishes one's senses, coordination, and ability to think and react. And ambient air temperatures do not have to be excessively cold in order to cause hypothermia. Wind contributes to reducing body temperature quickly, as does moisture—two conditions we often encounter while riding.

Some of the warning signs of hypothermia include: shivering/exhaustion, confusion/fumbling hands, memory loss/slurred speech, and drowsiness/reduced energy.

Shivering is the body's automatic emergency response. It's the body's attempt to warm itself up. If you begin to shiver, it's time to take a break and get off the road to warm up. Never jeopardize your health and safety by trying to "make those few extra miles" when your body starts sending you signals. And maintaining your body's hydration is equally important in cold temperatures as in hot weather, so be sure to drink plenty of water.

Prepare for temperature changes—both low and high—by dressing in layers. This way, it's easy to add or take away a layer of clothing to adjust for those changes. Layering starts with a wicking layer to keep perspiration away from your skin and includes thermal layers and an outer layer that is wind and/or water repellent.

Keep an extra sweatshirt and a change of socks packed in an easily accessible spot on your bike. If your feet get wet, change your

socks to help maintain your body temperature. A variety of electrically heated clothing is also available—from socks and gloves to full sets of riding gear—that can add comfort to cold temperature riding. These articles may be a great option if you like to extend your riding season into the colder seasons.

High temperatures, of course, can also cause health issues with riders. Being exposed to the day's heat and elevated road temperatures can sometimes feel like a blast furnace. This constant heat can lead to dehydration and more serious health issues like heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Consider altering the time of day that you travel during hot weather by being on the road earlier and off the road before the hottest part of the day. Take more frequent breaks and *make certain* to replenish your fluids at every stop. During the most extreme heat, soak a T-shirt during your stops and wear it under your riding jacket. The moisture from the shirt will help the body's cooling mechanism function more efficiently while riding. Bandanas, or products like the "Kewl Tie," can also be soaked in water, then refrigerated and hung around your neck to add comfort during a hot ride.

And nothing relieves your body better after a long, hot ride than reducing its temperature in an air-conditioned restaurant, motel room, or swimming pool at your day's end destination!

Lodging.

Home is where you hang your helmet, and lodging can be a very personal issue. Many times, there's not much give-and-take as to what people will accept as "adequate accommodations." You may be willing to sleep on a picnic table in a rest area on the side of an interstate highway, but others won't settle for less than a Holiday Inn with all its amenities. If someone wants those amenities, you'd best plan to accommodate their needs ahead of time.

In addition, do you and your riding companions plan to share accommodations? If so, do you have earplugs for the other riders' snoring? Or will all of you camp or look for mom & pop-owned hotels, name-brand hotels, or bed-and-breakfasts?

If you plan to camp, remember the important fact that your food needs will change and that making and breaking down camp will also figure into the time required before and after the day's ride. And you'll also need to deter-

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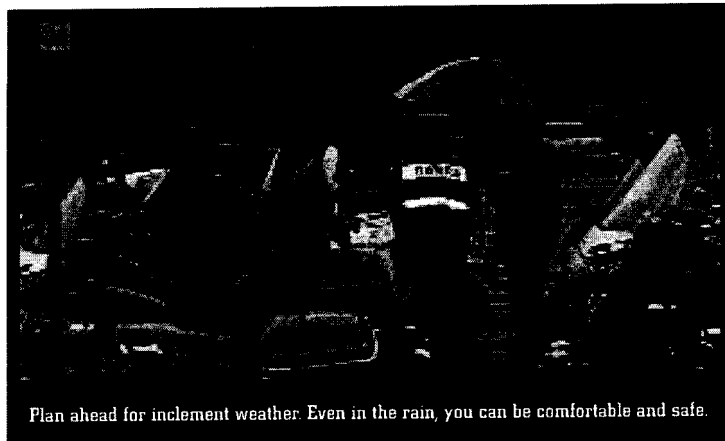
mine the time and space needed to store your camping gear on the bike.

If you don't plan to camp, remember that hotel, motel, and B&B costs and values have a wide range. And if ever you pull off the road into a motel parking lot and get an uneasy feeling about the neighborhood, trust your instincts. There may be a reason why those people next door paid unusual attention to your motorcycles coming off the road. Your "gut feelings" are usually on the mark. Smaller motels, and the ability to have a ground floor room, offer the opportunity to have your bike near your motel room door, sometimes providing you a bit more security. When staying at larger hotels, if your ride cannot be left outside your room door, ask the desk clerk about parking it near the front door of the hotel, where it's more apt to be visible to the personnel at the front desk.

Reservations.

There may be specific times during your trip when you know you need to be in a certain

place on a certain day. When that's the case, it's best to make reservations for those spots before you leave on your trip. Of course, not every day's ride may be orchestrated enough ahead of time to have a pre-determined stopping point and lodging at the end of the day's



Plan ahead for inclement weather. Even in the rain, you can be comfortable and safe.

ride, but even during peak tourist times, some reservations can be made effectively and efficiently with a little forethought.

When you're finished riding for the day, and you're reviewing the maps for the next day's ride and filling out your "route index cards," think about where you'll probably wind


up the next evening. Take some time to use the tourist information, travel booklets and such available locally to learn about which accommodations may be available down the road. Keep the telephone numbers with you so you can contact those places during breaks on the next day's ride.

During one of your morning stops—or at the latest, by your lunch stop—make some calls ahead to places in the area where you plan to stop for the night and make reservations. Many times, rest stops and information centers will also have tourist assistance kiosks and be able to help identify lodging options and assist you with reservations.

Although it's taking a chance with your night's lodging, you may find times when you do not look for lodging until you pull off the road for the night. Remember that the later you get off the road, the lesser the chances will be that you'll find adequate lodging, and the greater the chances you will be forced to continue riding farther than you originally planned.

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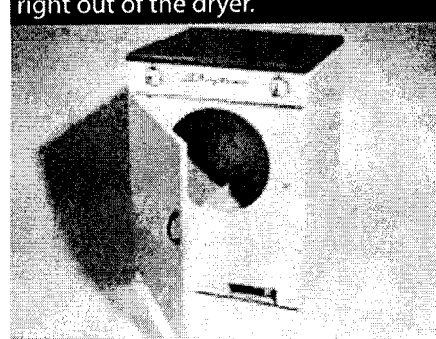
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If you have not made reservations, getting off the road before dinnertime in order to secure a place for the night is your best bet. As the time advances beyond 5 p.m., fewer and fewer places will be available. But if the first hotel or motel you stop at doesn't have space available, ask and, through their local contacts, they may be able to help you identify available accommodations in the area.

If you haven't made reservations before getting off the road, attempt to secure your lodging before finding a place for your evening meal. Although by the end of the day you'll be thinking of a nice meal, the time spent having dinner may cause the few available rooms you were counting on to be reserved by someone else.

Food.

Abrupt changes in your diet—like three greasy fast-food-joint meals and junk food snacks all day—can lead to unpleasant consequences with your digestive system, thereby leading to uncomfortable riding and scheduling conditions. And eating out, even at fast food restaurants, can quickly become expensive as well. Plan ahead and take advantage of grocery stores, markets, and local farm stands near where you stop for the night. Buy some fruits, vegetables, granola bars, trail mix and similar commodities. Not only will these give you a healthy alternative to a diet of grease, fat, and calories, but they will also afford you some variety in your daily caloric intake and help keep your insides pleased with what you're doing!

Again, don't forget the water. Yes, we all survive on caffeine, but simple H₂O is essential for keeping us all healthy, awake, hydrated, and "regular." Be sure to use your break time to drink more water before you saddle up. Also, every break, you should also try to use the restroom. Watch for signs that you're becoming thirsty, not urinating much, or that your urine is appearing dark in color—these indicators mean you are definitely not drinking enough water. Some long-distance riders take the extra step to encourage their water intake and, via a Camelbak® or other water bladder they can wear, are able to then drink on the move. Good idea.

The planning you did with your riding partners pre-trip will also dictate some of the trip's meal breaks as well. Have you agreed to stop at a nice sit-down restaurant each day (and spend money), did you instead plan to

bring sandwiches and snacks for a picnic-style stop each day, or did you plan to cook your own meal once you've reached your day's destination?

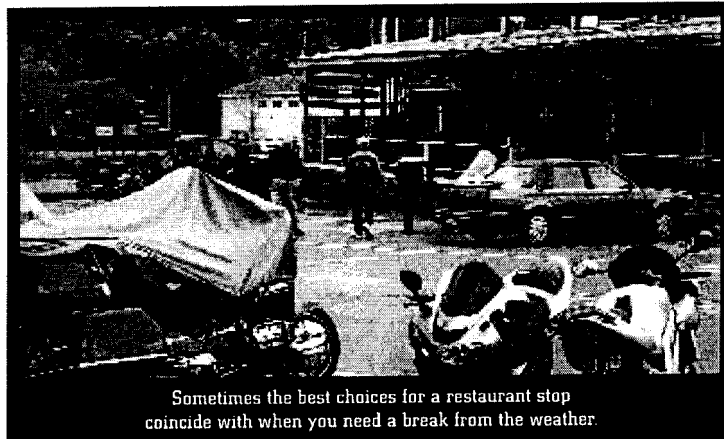
And "quick food"—planned before you even hit the road—doesn't mean just "junk

there are pleasant, relaxing places to stop and enjoy your meals while on the road. Parks, town commons, riversides, and even places like hospitals (and some commercial areas as well) provide well-groomed areas and even an occasional picnic table welcoming you for a brief stop.

Once you plan for nutritious snacks along the way, remember to also carry enough basic supplies so that, if you reach a midday mealtime without being near a restaurant, you can have some basic sustenance. Important to remember is that when you become hungry, your body and mind begin to focus on your physical deficiencies and not on the road. To keep the amount of focus needed to

maintain a safe journey on a motorcycle, some quick snacks can take the edge off your hunger and keep you focused on your riding skills, at least until you can stop for a more substantial and convenient rest and meal break.

Pre-planning with other riding partners also can determine if there's someone in the



Sometimes the best choices for a restaurant stop coincide with when you need a break from the weather

food" either. Good snacks, like peanuts or trail mix or fruits, can offer protein and quick—natural—energy and are always good snack alternatives to the empty calories so easily available near the convenience store checkout counter.

Usually, even in a busy city atmosphere,



Remember When:

Photos really were still taken in black-and-white?

The first Wing Ding found folks hanging out by the Hilton pool?

Elvis really did leave the building (along with an unnamed cohort)?

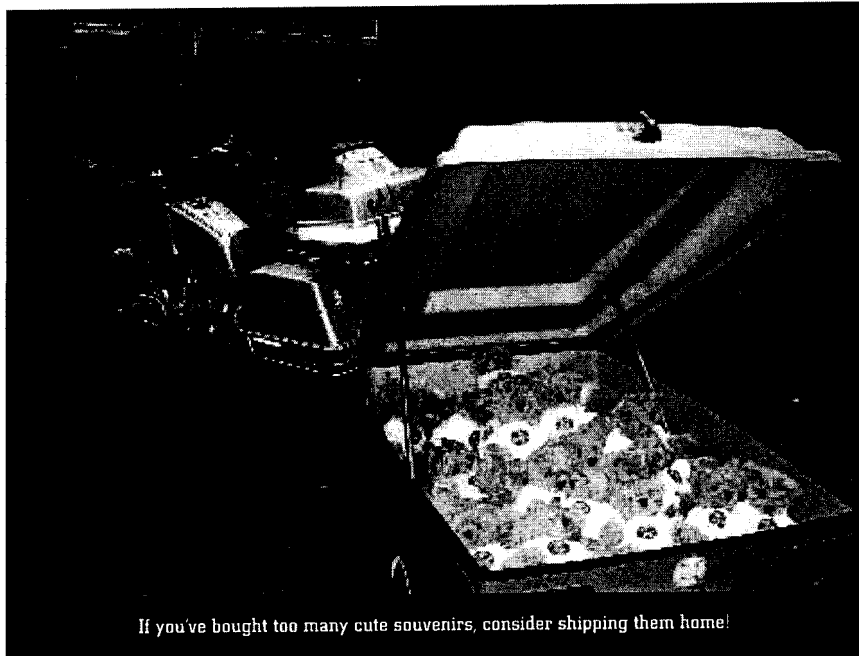
Time to get your scrapbooks out to help the International Headquarters complete a 30th Anniversary Yearbook!

Look back on three decades of GWRRA Family photos to pick out and send in some of your favorites for the "Remembering 30 Years of Fun, Safety & Knowledge" keepsake, coming soon.

Check out www.gwrra.org for more details about upcoming photo submission rules, deadlines, and expected arrival dates for the yearbook.



How about a picnic lunch beside a flowing river as a break from the fast food blahs?



If you've bought too many cute souvenirs, consider shipping them home!

group who needs to stop and eat at very specific times of the day. Certain medical conditions and medications make it imperative that those people maintain a very rigid eating and medication schedule.

Essential elements.

There are those riders who leave home without a map or a planned destination, sleep on rest area picnic tables for lodging, and consume caffeine and condiments at burger joints. For them, packing more than the clothes on their backs is not a big concern. When their clothes get too ripe for them to stand next to themselves, a quick shower (clothes and all!) at a truck stop shower is probably sufficient. For the rest of us, however, we need to think about what we should and shouldn't take and how we're going to carry it all.

Are you traveling one-up or two-up? Do you have motorcycle luggage that you're going to tote along or not? Do you tow a trailer for "alternative loading," or are the storage spaces on your bike the only available storage you have? The answers to these questions will quickly determine how much clothing you can take.

Even with the added cargo capabilities available with today's tow-behind trailers, knowing how to pack, weigh and balance a trailer's contents is still essential for a safe ride. The trailer tongue weight should not exceed 10 percent of the gross weight of the trailer, so as not to place too much weight on the bike's trailer hitch. An overloaded or unbalanced trailer will affect the steering, handling, and braking ability of the motorcycle and can be unsafe.

What clothes are you going to need?

Riding attire, casual clothes, and clothes for a variety of weather scenarios are all items to think about it. Then ask yourself whether or not you will or will not rely on your spouse to pack all your socks and underwear. During your first night on the road is not the time to find out that the "bare essentials" you're wearing are the only ones you have!

You may decide to pack just a few changes of clothes, then do laundry every few days during a long trip. Scheduled "down-days" are always important every now and then during a multi-day trip. A day of reduced miles, or a stop at the same location for two nights in a row, will help you catch up on essentials like laundry and will also allow each traveler's body important rest and recovery time.

An alternative to repetitive laundry stops is to buy the T-shirts and tourist-style clothing, so prevalent throughout the country, as you travel on your trip. Then you can continually wear the new clothing items and, every now and again, box up and ship home all your dirty clothes. That first package that arrives home will be a big surprise!

Shipping items out *ahead* of you is also an option to consider if you have a specific place and a specific event to be at during your trip. The suit and dress for a surprise dinner for your spouse while in Las Vegas probably will not travel well in the trunk of your touring bike. But arrangements can be made to ship those items to your hotel and have them waiting for you—cleaned and pressed—for your arrival. After the event, those same garments can then be packed and shipped back home and—*voilà!*—you're back on the road without any further concerns about them.

Shipping can also be a viable means of dealing with souvenirs. (You just *had* to have that miniature, working model of Mount Saint Helens as you made your way through Washington State, didn't you!) A nearby UPS or FedEx pick up point—and many times the place of purchase itself—will happily ship your specialty item home. And if you pack your souvenirs in with your dirty clothes, the folks at home will take even better care of your dirty laundry because it contains hidden prizes—just like the cereal boxes we dug through as kids!

Finally, shipping may be a consideration for your very motorcycle itself. If you have only a small window of opportunity during which to ride your motorcycle at your chosen destination, it may be beneficial to ship your bike there, then fly out and meet up with your bike to begin the trip. A trip through the Rocky Mountains, for example, may be something you've always wished for but could never afford the several days that it would take to drive out and back through those endless miles of cornfields, etc., to get there.

A number ways exist to ship your bike via air, rail or truck freight. This option can enable you to have the best trip possible within the timeframe you have available. A quick visit to GWRRA's homepage, at www.gwrra.org, or any search on the Internet will provide a number of companies that specialize in shipping motorcycles. You can also check with GWRRA's Member Services department, other rider organizations, or even your automobile association for companies they recommend.

Customs and border crossing.

In light of today's worldwide political climate, countries' border crossings can be complicated. Research time spent to learn exactly which forms and I.D.s are required to cross each border is time well spent.

Likewise, having your proper documentation and personal goods readily accessible for when you reach those borders will help expedite the process as well. In years past, a simple driver's license was sufficient for many border locations. But those times are long gone. Now, even a birth certificate and accompanying picture identification won't be enough, in some cases, to cross from the U.S. into Canada. And a passport will certainly be required if you cross the border via air or water. As of the writing of this article, many authorities seem to indicate that, by the conclusion of 2007, a passport will be required for any border crossing area.

Standard questions you should expect to answer at the customs stop include: "Where are you from?"; "Where are you going?"; "How long will you be in the country?"; "What is the purpose of your trip?"; and "Are you bringing anything with you that you intend to leave behind?" Ensure that you have proper vehicle registration and proof of insurance papers before ever attempting to cross a border. Canada also requires that you have a Canadian Insurance Card. Your insurance agent can give you a copy of this card to carry with you. And, if your vehicle is not registered in your name, you should also have written permission from the registered owner that you are allowed to be in possession of the vehicle you are driving.

Do *not* attempt to bring forbidden items across the border with you. Possession of firearms and other weapons will cost you time, aggravation, and possibly arrest. Other items, such as meats, plants, fruits and vegetables, may also be banned at the border. Alcohol and cigarettes have restrictions on the amounts allowed.

Be prepared to formally declare any items that you've purchased during your time abroad. Gifts you have received are also restricted, depending on their value. If you have questions about requirements and restrictions, contact the U.S. Customs Office before your trip to avoid any undue hardship when you reach the border.

And keep all receipts from any purchases during your time in Canada, even lodging receipts. By obtaining taxable refund forms at the border, you can file with the Canadian government to receive part of your money back that went towards taxes while in-country.

Most importantly, as you wait in line for your turn to cross the border, be patient. The men and women securing the border are doing a very difficult job in these trying times, and



Sometimes hauling or shipping your Wing may be the best way to make good use of your vacation time.

becoming short-tempered or angry with them will not benefit you, your riding partners, or your vacation.

Motorcycle Adventure List.

Believe it or not, a vast amount of information on what to do and how to plan a motorcycle trip is available from your friends, riding clubs and organizations, and other motorcyclists you meet along the way. Resource them, as well as traditional travel sources, and begin to develop your own "Motorcycle Adventure List" that will help act as a check sheet for those essential items and actions that are needed when you're preparing for your trip.

What pre-planned items should be on your

list for your motorcycle? Tools, lightbulbs, fuses, bike cover, tie-downs? Do you need a spare tire for your trailer? How about those miscellaneous items that may be "nice to have" or even "necessary to have"? Have you thought of them all? Do you need a flashlight, camera, bug spray, sunblock? Remember your emergency contact information. Every rider should have a list of emergency contact information for himself and every other rider

in the group that specifies whom to call in case of emergency, plus physicians' names and contact information and listings of any medical issues, necessary medications and, of course, requisite bike insurance and roadside service information.

But sometimes things are forgotten until after you've left on your trip. So remember to cancel the newspaper and to leave your contact information and trip itinerary with someone at home. Also, do people have contact information for the

numbers of your plumber or furnace repairman, to deal with "home problems" that may arise? Have you made arrangements for "house checks" while you're gone? These are all pieces of the plan that will provide you peace of mind while you're on the road.

Finally, the biggest part of the plan—after all the time and effort you've put into planning—is to *leave*! Once you're on your way, don't worry about home or work, just have a great time.

And always remember that: (1) It's not an "official ride" until you've done at least one unplanned U-turn; (2) Don't think of it as being lost—you are just on an adventure that you haven't yet listed on your itinerary! ●

Closing Thoughts

The Inner Journalist—While you may not consider yourself the next great American novelist, keep a small notebook on your bike anyway. Each day, take a few minutes to write down your day's thoughts, destinations, sights, sounds, and adventures. This type of personal journal will keep your memories fresh for years to come. You'll be amazed later at how the few words you do jot down while on the road will bring back many other details when you finally do re-read them.

What's the next ride—As you sit read-

ing this article, reclined in your chair, take advantage of the moment and daydream a bit. Begin plans for that trip—long or short—that you hope to take in the future with your friends and your bike. Keep a stack of maps handy, and use nights that don't have quality TV programming choices to instead look for all the destination points you've read about or heard others talk of after their own trips. Planning is the beginning of the fun. Your next great motorcycle ride is really just a little bit of planning away. So where are *you* headed next? ●