

## Secrets For Smart Touring

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 very reasonable. Or use your Phone to check the Weather and radar in the area you are riding.
5. On high-mileage days, you'll feel a lot better if you carry eye drops 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](http://www.whitehorsepress.com) for years) can keep you on course without the bulk of a tank bag.
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. Or purchase a Helmet with Ear Flaps. Many of these will zip out for those other days when you don't want them.
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. Or, instead of bungees, try using strips of Velcro 18" to 24" long. They are adjustable and strong, and the smooth side doesn't scuff your bike's finish.
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 a Roadside Assistance program. Whether it be through HOG, the dealer internet or Harley Davidson. Have a 800 number that you can call in an emergency.
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 tank bags or soft saddlebags, and every latch on hard luggage.
20. 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.

21. 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.
22. 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.
23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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](http://www.roadsideamerica.com). World's largest concrete bison, anyone?
26. 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.
27. 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.
28. If you can afford it and are short of time, you could always ship your bike somewhere cool and ride it back.
29. 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.
30. A nap can do wonders on a long day.