

Loading up your motorcycle for a road trip

(Overnight road trips like Sturgis, Front Range, etc)

by Bard Board

We aren't going to talk about WHAT to bring. That's a topic for another article! Here, we will talk about HOW to load what you do bring. Low, center, tight and secure is the key to carrying a month's worth of stuff for your weekend get-a-way.



Loading a motorcycle properly is very similar to getting the weight and balance factor correct on a cargo aircraft, or even a small plane. The CG, or center of gravity is critical for proper and safe flight, and on a motorcycle packing weight needs to be as close to the middle of the bike as possible, and as low on the bike as possible.



Heavy tools should be in the front of the saddle bags, and on the bottom, NOT up in your tour pack on top of your rain gear. All heavy items should be packed in the lower bags and light items in the tour pack. Also, items you may need to access in a hurry, like rain gear, should be on top in the bags or the tour pack. If you are traveling solo, favor using the rear seat area for storage of heavier luggage vs. the tour pack.



What you are trying to accomplish is the elimination of a "polar moment". This would occur when coming to a quick stop or if the pavement is wet and the weight, which SHOULD be center and low, is hanging off the rear of the bike. This would aggravate handling and may cause that weight on the rear of the bike to swing around towards the front by a 'polar moment of inertia.'

Good Tie Downs are an important part of keeping your packs in place. Bungees have been traditionally used, but take a look at these ROK Straps. This video, ROK Straps vs.

Bungee straps, is a great start.

<http://www.rokstraps.com/index.html>

I guarantee once you've used a ROK strap you will never use a bungee again. Safer, tighter, adjustable, they are the only way to secure a load securely.

Oh, did I say, don't bring so much? The tendency is to over pack. Do you really need 6 tee shirts knowing you're going to buy 3 or 4 tee's while at Sturgis? Also, consider using the post office, UPS or FedEx to ship extra stuff to your destination a few days before you leave. Then, all you will have to pack are the supplies you will need while on the bike! All three shipping options have a variety of boxes you can choose from.



For those things you DO pack on the bike, the use of plastic garbage bags or vacuum storage bags are great options to wrap or cover stuff that you want to stay dry. Even HD hard bags and tour packs sometimes leak.

Once you have all of these decisions made, check the recommended tire pressure, shock absorber settings and air pressure as outlined in your owner's manual for heavier loads. Recommended settings and pressures are much different for a fully loaded up bike!



Now that you have your strategies set, pack up early and BEFORE departure, pre-load your bike and go for a 10 mile ride and cross a few RR tracks and hit some bumps. Then back in your garage see what came loose and shifted... hopefully your pre-planning keeps things in place. No one, not even Gomer Pyle, likes to hear 'surprise, surprise, surprise' at this place and time!

That's it! You now have the basics for HOW to pack!
Ready, Set, Go! And...Have a nice trip!