

Packing the Motorcycle

There are three points to consider when packing for a trip on your motorcycle. They are weight, location and security.

Weight: Check the owner's manual for weight limitations and recommendations for tire pressure and suspension adjustments. Every motorcycle has a maximum load specified by its manufacturer. It is the difference between empty weight and the maximum allowable weight of the motorcycle and its load, including the operator and co-rider.

Location: Due to a motorcycle's size and weight, and the fact it only has two wheels, where the load is carried is important. Keep the weight low and as close to the center of the motorcycle as possible, and keep it evenly distributed side to side. Place heavier items in the "load triangle", the space formed within the top the riders head and the two axles. Although luggage racks and top trunks appear to be ideal places to pack things, carrying weight high and to the rear of the rear axle will lighten the front wheel and may cause a degree of handling instability.

Security: Be sure the load is secure. Bungee cords have come loose and caused the item to get lost. I use the elastic netting and have had very good luck with keeping items on my tour pack. The only items I have on my tour pack are my rain gear or an extra jacket. I like to keep every thing out of sight and locked in the saddle bags or tour pack. If I am riding solo, I have a "T" bag on the rear seat and it is locked to the bike with the same cable I lock the Wing with at night.

These are the recommendations of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation and I have seen riders not follow them and get in trouble with the handling of their motorcycle on trips.

When we ride on a trip "two up", packing for the trip is always a problem. When Karen and I first were married and took our first trip in the Wing, she thought she could bring everything she thought she "may" need for the trip and a few extra things. We put the things we will need to get our destination in pile number one. Then we put the things we will need at our destination in pile number two. We then put the items we will need for the trip home in pile three.

Pile one gets packed in the Wing. Pile two and three gets packed in a box and shipped to the motel or hotel where we have reservations at our destination. Leave extra room in the box because you will need room for the items you buy at your destination. When you get to your destination, you have clean clothes and don't have to spend time washing clothes. Karen likes to buy things for the kids and grandkids and we don't have to worry about if we have the room on the Wing to

carry the things home. On one trip, I bought a piece of furniture and had it shipped home.

Many Gold Wing riders like to tow a trailer. I have two problems with towing a trailer. One is the extra weight behind the rear axle and the second problem is the limitation it has in certain states. For example in California any vehicle with three or more axles is required by the vehicle code to stay in the right lane except to pass a slower vehicle and can not exceed 55 MPH. I know of several riders that have been stopped for speed while towing a trailer. Some received a citation and some got off with a warning. They were just keeping up with the riders that were not towing a trailer and riding under the posted speed limit. A number of states have similar laws. Riders that camp don't have much of a choice and need the extra space to carry their camping gear. When I was camping on the bike, I rode solo and was able to get all my gear loaded on my Wing. I was very restricted on what I could carry and spent time in the laundry at the camp site. At our age, Karen and I consider roughing it when the motel doesn't have a refrigerator or a microwave in the room.

Ride safe and keep the rubber side down.

Dick Studdard