



# Is motorcycle camping for you?

by James T. Parks  
Road Runner Magazine

## Step 1 - Start Out Modestly

You've decided to try motorcycle camping, but please don't go overboard by spending a lot of money on all of the latest camping equipment and planning a seven-day excursion for your first trip. On that first trip: (1) travel light - buy or borrow just enough equipment for a one-night outing at a location familiar to you; (2) reduce trip complexity by not cooking, and eat your meals at restaurants; and (3) don't venture too far from home, just in case your first camping experience goes badly and you



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## Next Breakfast/Brunch

### Sunday, April 3



### WHERE:

Mary's Bleue Moon Cafe  
9535 Canora Road  
Sidney

### WHEN:

9:30 am





# Plan your summer camping trips now



## ***Planning in advance helps in eliminating problems.***

want to make a quick return. This strategy keeps you from investing too much money in gear before learning whether motorcycle camping is for you. On future trips, develop your knowledge and skills, and gradually increase the length, duration, and complexity of camping trips.

### **Step 2 - Plan Carefully**

Because a motorcycle has limited carrying capacity, take everything you will need but nothing more. Motorcycle camping is essentially backpacking on two wheels; so going through a carefully thought out checklist is essential. Several websites for checklists are included below, but some of those lists are much too extensive. For example, do you really need, or even want, to take your laptop computer or PDA on a camping trip if your goal is to get away from it all? To refine your

checklist during your trip, make a note of the things you needed, but didn't bring, and the things you brought but didn't really need.

Before setting out on a motorcycle camping trip, it's advisable to check the extended weather forecast. If persistent rain or severe conditions are likely, reschedule.

### **Step 3 - Check Your Gear Before Leaving Home**

To avoid becoming the primary source of entertainment at the campground, familiarize yourself with how all of your camping equipment works before leaving home. Set up your tent in the backyard; figure out how the stove works and cook something on it; try out your sleeping pad and sleeping bag; and, using your checklist, assemble and inventory all of your gear to see if anything is

missing.

### **Step 4 - Packing**

Don't overload the motorcycle. It's a good idea to pack your camping equipment and other travel items first in hard saddlebags and a top case, if you have them. Additional items should be packed in a single waterproof bag tightly secured to the motorcycle. For items that absolutely have to stay dry, like camera equipment, encase them in zip-lock freezer bags. As a rule, heavier items should be stored as low as possible and forward of the rear wheel. The day before you're scheduled to leave, pack the bike, and take a local test ride to make sure the bike handles safely and that all items are well secured.

### **Step 5 - Match the Campsite to Your Needs**

Motorcycle campers should know in advance where they plan on staying each night of the trip. Reservations, when available, assure a place to camp, especially if there's a possibility of arriving late in the day. Recommended campgrounds for beginners should have running water, preferably at the campsite, toilets, and showers. Gain more experience if you want to do some "rough" camping, without any campsite amenities. Refer to the list below for motorcycle-only and motorcycle-friendly campgrounds you might try. But be careful when entering the mixed-use campgrounds, because roads



# Enjoy getting back to nature



## **Overpacking is a problem for most motorcyclist campers.**

easily negotiated by a four-wheeled vehicle may be treacherous for a heavily loaded street bike.

Good site selection is also important. The intended location of your tent should be as level and smooth as possible, and it should be free of any obvious pests (ants or any other small carnivorous critters). To help ensure a good night's sleep, try to locate as far away as possible from potential sources of light and noise. Camping close to the bathrooms may seem like a good idea, but they are usually lighted and a source of pedestrian traffic throughout the night. And, finally, if other campers have passed up a site that seems too good to be true, there is probably a good reason - choose carefully!

### **Step 6 - Clothing**

The type of clothing brought will

depend on your planned off-bike activities, like hiking, or eating at a nice restaurant, and the range of temperatures expected during your trip. You should bring shower shoes or rubber booties for showering, and having a light windbreaker is always a good idea. Garments made of synthetic materials are generally better for camping and riding than those made from cotton. Light synthetic materials dry quickly, compress easily for packing, keep you cooler on hot days, and can be layered for warmth when the weather turns cold. Motorcycle rain gear is usually sufficient protection for rainy weather in camp, but some type of waterproof hat might be added to your wet weather ensemble.

### **Step 7 - Don't Skimp on Shelter**

I've read about minimalist

motorcycle campers who sleep under an old shower curtain or with no shelter at all. I don't see the point, particularly when reasonably priced, lightweight tents are available. The rule of thumb on tents for motorcycle camping is to buy one with the capacity to hold one person more than will be sleeping in it. A two-person tent, for example, allows a lone camper to stow his or her gear safely inside and out of the weather. My preference is to have a side-entry dome tent with a waterproof bottom and separate rain fly. And, don't forget to protect the bottom of your tent with some type of ground cover. Investing in a good tent helps ensure that you'll be dry and not snuggling up with any uninvited, squiggly guests.

### **Step 8 - Comfortable Bedding**

If others tell you that real bikers sleep on the ground, just say you're happy for them and then go buy a quality sleeping pad. My favorite is the Therm-a-Rest® brand that self inflates. Because I'm a side sleeper, I bought the thickest, full-length model I could find, which takes up a little more space than the thinner ones - but for me it's worth it.

Carrying a sleeping bag, even in warm weather, is a smart strategy because an unexpected cold front can cause temperatures to plummet and there is nothing worse than shivering through a long, cold night in your tent. A good down





# As you gain experience, it gets easier

or synthetic mummy bag rolls up, packs to the size of a Butterball® turkey, and provides warmth down to 20 degrees.

Although you have a dry and comfortable place to spend the night, sleep, sometimes, may not come easily. To mute any disturbing noises from man or Mother Nature, just insert your earplugs and close your eyes.

## Step 9 - Meal Planning

Portable meals have come a long way since the days when I was wandering in the woods with the

Army. Now we just add water to a freeze-dried meal package and, voila, even I can fix a gourmet meal on a camping trip. Before leaving home, though, it's smart to plan which meals you expect to prepare versus those you'll eat in a restaurant. Although there's no need to pack the trip's complete food supply before first setting out, anticipating and bringing the cooking equipment, condiments, and other related items needed is good planning. It's also wise to pack water-purification tablets in case you have doubts about the potable

quality of any campground water.

## Step 10 - Relax, Have Fun

If your first few trips aren't all you thought they would be, relax and know that, with more experience, all aspects of motorcycle camping eventually become second nature and more enjoyable. You will learn new strategies and techniques on every trip that will enhance your camping skills for future trips. Remember, part of the fun is being prepared for, and experiencing, the unexpected, and then recounting your adventures with other motorcycle campers.

## Club 2016 Event Schedule

Date	Event	Location
Sunday, April 3, 2016	Monthly Gathering	Mary's Bleue Moon
Saturday, April 16, 2016	Cow Bay Run	Cow Café in Cowichan Bay
TBD May, 2016	Annual BCCOM MLA Ride	Victoria
Saturday, May 7, 2016	Monthly Gathering	Olympic View Golf Course
TBD May, 2016	BMW Demo Ride	Island BMW
Sunday, May 15, 2016	Monthly Ride	Saltaire Pub, Ladysmith
May 27 to 30, 2016	49er Rally	Mariposa, California
Saturday, June 4, 2016	Monthly Gathering	Shady Rest Pub, Qualicum Beach
Sunday, June 5, 2016	Motorcycle Ride to Live	Fountain Tire, Langford
June 18 & 19, 2016	Up Island Event	TBD
June 17 to 19, 2016	Chief Joseph Rally	John Day, Oregon

### A Reminder to All...

If you haven't already paid your 2016 BMW RVI membership dues please complete a membership renewal form and forward it with your payment to Peter Juergensen. Alternatively you can hand it to Peter at the next breakfast meeting.

**Please click [HERE](#) to download a copy of the Membership form from our website.**