

Grand Touring (continued)

There is no sense in trying to get enough food for the entire trip at once. Stores are scattered everywhere. Dried pack foods are expensive and wear thin. Local groceries will satisfy your needs. I even try to fix some kind of salad every few days as canned goods get tiresome. Try to eat lightly when on the road as a stuffed feeling is unpleasant when you have to remain bent over the handlebars.

Fishing is a good sport to follow. Licenses are usually cheap enough for out of state people. You might even catch a fish, which tastes super out on the road. Backpacker rods carry well and can be made by cutting an old rod and getting ferrules at a local fishing shop. Tackle can be bought locally on the advice of people in the area you intend to fish.

Cameras are nice, I bought a small rugged one but I am not about to take one of my Pentaxes on an outdoor trip. Good old Kodak Instamatics will see you through; besides, it's not good to get hung up with preserving the trip on film. Enjoy it now and let the pictures follow.

Now for the acid test. Go out on an overnight trip to some park close to home. It is amazing what you thought you would need that stays in the packs. You might have overlooked something, however. One useless item is a lantern. Good lanterns are too large, small lanterns are no good. Use a flashlight and parking lights, but basically go to bed at dark and rise at dawn. Forget about reading yourself to sleep.

The gear in use is the important thing. I will describe a typical travelling day as an example. I usually wake around dawn. Dew forms on everything in the damp pine forest and there is no reason to stir until some of it burns off. I usually roll and look around as the sun hits the treetops. My boots are beside me where I put them, filled with pocket items. I fumble around for my glasses. The stove was set up the night before with the pot filled for boiling tea. I dig out matches and go through the ritual of lighting the stove. It gives out a healthy roar which begins to wake me up. The tea, cup, and sugar are in reach so I can lay back and relax while waiting for the water to boil. The stove is loud in the morning, but at night it seems quiet after the wind noise I get used to. It is hours before I really hear at night. There are quiet a few little varmints in the woods but they could care less about me and my machine and scurry about without paying me any attention. The water boils, I dump in the tea and wait for it to steep. The morning air is usually cool enough to make a jacket feel good for a while. The tea is ready and I pour the first steaming cup, dump in two spoonfuls of brown sugar and sip it quickly. It goes down well and I am ready to begin the day, standing and doing the famed dance of-the-one-sock-foot, as I find the other boot and put it on. A second cup of tea and turn the stove down as low as possible to keep the last tea from boiling away. I seldom eat first thing in the morning so I can begin to strike camp. I pull the plug on the air mattress and watch it flatten. My morning exercise is stuffing the sleeping gear into its bag. The last cup of tea is pretty strong but still good. I put away last night's utensils, checking to see that the washing was adequate. As the stove cools, I put it away and rinse the pot. The bike starts on the first kick as always, and I finish lashing down the stuff and roar off. Midmorning finds me stopped for a bite of cheese and water for breakfast. Lunch is a longer stop with something hot like soup and maybe a sandwich or two. Afternoon follows the pattern with gas and coke stops as often as I feel like them. I usually fill up late in the day and check on likely camping spots with the local people. Night finds me cooking my fancy meal. I sometimes take along my small wok for oriental cooking. I am of sufficient bulk so I don't have to worry about starving quickly. When I finally reach my selected

area I tend to loaf and fish a lot with only short trips around on the bike or occasionally a walk back into the woods for a day. People are as interesting as any locale. I try to talk to people and it is easy when they see I am not a long-haired, dope-crazed motorcycle thug. The Ducati usually brings come comments as it is unusual in most areas, then conversation switches to friends who ride or were killed on motorcycles. Conversation can lead anywhere and I don't consider it time wasted even in seemingly remote areas and rural areas.

You can see I enjoy my trips. I make no great claims about my riding prowess. I do not enjoy more than about two hours on the bike without a break. At the first of a trip the time is even shorter. Most people are the same way, in groups the weakest one will have to call the halts. After a few days everyone will get into a rhythm. I write for one person travelling alone as this is my preferred method. Groups are good too as they provide security, companionship and cooking and other things about groups are nice. The load can be lightened by splitting common gear. The only disadvantage is that everyone must be in substantial agreement on routes while I prefer the freedom of riding alone.

There is much fun to be had by striking out for the wilds from the back of a bike. There can be problems too, so check for regulations in neighboring states. For instance, expect to wear a helmet as that law is still on the books in many states so don't fight it. Above all relax, don't try for record miles per day, it isn't worth it. Keep the roadmaps closed as much as possible. There are really no wrong turns only uncommon routes.

This is a pretty short overview of an interesting travel style. More information is available on backpacking. Colin Fletcher's book, The Complete Walker, is excellent. All things related to walking with all of your gear are valid on a motorcycle. I am inclosing a couple of photos of the bike loaded and a typical camp.

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