

APPAREL PRO: TOURING APPAREL

This spring I was lucky enough to spend over two months in both Western and Eastern Europe touring my motorcycle. Not only did I ride through very diverse seasons, spring into summer, but I also rode in very diverse geographic locations and weather conditions. Two months to myself gave me a lot of helmet time to reflect on my apparel choices and the extremes in which I ride and expect my motorcycle apparel to perform.

For this trip I chose a suit that was of a one-layer waterproof laminate construction. This type of fabrication makes the suit wholly waterproof when all the zippers are done up and in their zipper houses. My thought was riding in the spring in Europe I might encounter storms and wet weather, and I didn't want to have to peel off my suit roadside in order to put on a rain layer underneath my shell. I also don't have to stuff my panniers with extra layers in case of rain, both of which are definite upsides to this type of construction.

The downside of this type of touring apparel is that the suit is generally warmer to wear, even though the waterproof laminate in most cases is considered "breathable." Correct vent placement and the size of vents and/or vented panels are what make the suit more wearable in warmer climates, and personally I've found them downright hot in 90+ degree environments.

Since moving to California I've primarily been using touring apparel that has a rain layer instead of the waterproofing built into the outer shell. This is great in hotter, drier climates because the suit is overall much cooler. Some apparel companies offer a thermal layer in addition to the rain layer, making these a true three-season suit.

If the sky does happen to open up while I'm wearing the non-waterproof shell, however, I'm often caught getting wet while I dig the additional layers out of my panniers, take the outer layer off and install my rain layer. And if I want to put the rain layer inside my pants, I'd rather be seen in my skivvies by strangers on the road than suffer being wet and cold for a long period of time. I consider this is a definite downside.

So what's the perfect solution? Well, that's up to the individual rider, and also what makes it hard to stock your dealership with what you think your customers will buy for those long trips. The coolest thing I've seen so far is Olympia's three-layer system in which the rain layer is sized generously enough to fit under or over the outer shell. Another great solution is a Forcefield's exoskeleton that holds the armor and essentially serves as mesh jacket, with a rain layer to go over it in the rain or cold.

Why not turn this conundrum into an interactive discussion with your customers? Do an online survey through your newsletter or a Facebook poll on social media. And even if you don't think you'll get valuable information, at least you'll have your customers thinking that you care about their wants and needs, and that you value their opinions. Who knows? You might just get some unexpected answers and bright ideas you had not thought of before. ↵



Correct vent placement and size of vents and/or vented panels are what make a touring jacket or suit more wearable in warmer climates. Stocking the right products for touring riders can be a challenge because of the many extreme weather situations. But dealers can turn this situation into an opportunity to poll customers or put on apparel clinics to go over the many options.

