



Friends You Haven't Met

Motorcycle Travel Network



Scott and Christi Reynolds, founders of the Motorcycle Travel Network, pose along side their BMW

BY ALISA CLICKENGER

A warm welcome, safe space to park your bike, a hot shower, and comfy bed, all for \$20 per night? A dream come true? You bet. Oh, did I mention that breakfast is included? Welcome to the Motorcycle Travel Network, conceived by Christi and Scott Reynolds for budget motorcycle travelers who enjoy a personal touch. Now in its fourth year, Motorcycle-Travel.net has over 450 members.

I originally heard about the Motorcycle Travel Network in the summer of 2006, when a fellow adventure traveler mentioned it as I was crossing the country. I joined up, but didn't have much luck with accommodations along my path across the middle tier of the US. This year I was crossing the country again, and I decided to renew (membership dues are \$30/year and each night's stay is \$15 for a single, \$20 for a couple) and see if I'd have better luck, because I really like the concept of a bed-and-breakfast network hosted by and specifically catering to motorcycle travelers.

I did, indeed, have better luck this summer. I stayed with my first Motorcycle Travel Network hosts, Marty and Vicki, on the first day of my cross-country adventure. I'd gotten a late start that day, and was arriving late (9 pm), so I called along the way to see whether I was still welcome. I was.

"Since it's raining, we'll leave the garage doors open for you," Marty told me. "Because our neighbor's house looks similar to ours, if you pull into a garage without a bunch of motorcycles, it's a good bet you're at the wrong house."

down at the kitchen table and put a plate of food in front of me.

Dinner is not normally included in the network, but these are the type of folks thoughtful enough to feed me, knowing I was arriving late after battling weather and covering a lot of miles. "We were at a barbeque at a friend's house, and [he] insisted we bring back a plate of leftovers for you," Vicki said. Then she served me up a fat slice of delectable chocolate cake she'd baked that afternoon. The next morning, Marty helped me with a mechanical issue on the motorcycle, and I was gratefully on my way. I've since made good friends with both of them, and believe me, I'm going to make sure I pass through their state every year!

The Bad

The second night of my trip, I was not so lucky. Again I was running late due to rain, and politely called the folks I was to stay with the next night — but they said that a 9 pm arrival was too late for them. Too bad for me — I wound up camping. This particular trip I was on a strict so-many-miles-per-day schedule, and the third night put me just into in Nebraska. There are only two members listed in Nebraska, neither of which were within 200 miles of where I needed to stop, so again I erected the tent.

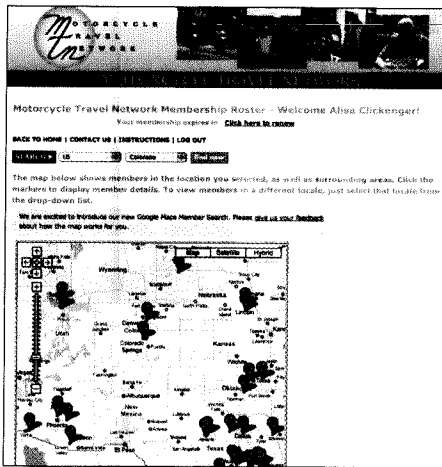
To make the best use of the MTN, one needs to plan ahead. And that can be a challenge if you are a make-it-up-as-you-go traveler like myself. It's most effective to plan your trip from home, making all the contacts before your journey. After all, you're not staying at hotels with unlimited availability; your hosts are real riders with real lives, and often in motorcycling season they are doing the same thing other riders are doing — riding.

I found the web site a bit difficult to use in plotting my course. I had to plot my travel path on a US map, then refer to MTN's online drop-down list for a list of members in individual states. When there were no members along my path of travel, I had to zoom in on the Google map available on the page to see if there were hosts close by (or at all). Once identified, I then had to check the paper map again to see how far

The Good

One of the pluses about staying with motorcycle-friendly hosts is that they understand motorcycle travelers' needs. They knew my first concern would be getting the bike parked, unpacked, and getting out of my wet rain gear. Both Vicki and Marty helped me carry my things into the house, herded me up to the shower, and when I came back downstairs to chat, they sat me





off my intended course that took me. Next, I had to contact the members by telephone or e-mail to check availability.

Motorcycle-Travel.net is organized by country, then by state. The search feature only allows searches by state, but if I zoomed in and out of maps, I could see a broader or smaller area. A tip I got from founder Scott is to search the US section, with Select a State as the state selection, then one can see the broader US and where members are located.

The Upswing

Many new members join the network each month, and the network is growing. While Christi and Scott do a small amount of print advertising, it's been word of mouth, as in my case, that has steadily drawn new members. They also set up booths at some rallies, and lead informative programs on budget travel. Be sure to look for them at the Wing Ding in Tulsa, Oklahoma, July 2-5, and at the BMW National Rally in Tennessee, July 16-19.

MTN members are asked to host as well as stay, and this reciprocity creates a sense of community among network members. Hosting is rewarding as well — while staying with me this summer, Clyde Hunter wrote the following poem (in addition to fixing my kitchen door!)

*On the Motorcycle Travel Net
There are no Strangers
Just friends we haven't met...
All seem to go the extra mile
They'll warm your trip with
hugs and a smile
Clyde Hunter 8-24-08*

All riders should consider joining the Motorcycle Travel Network; more hosts means more places to stay. After all, where else can you get bed & breakfast for \$15-\$20 a night? **RB**

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