



**Save money on lodging
by pitching a tent.**

Big Adventure on a small budget

> By **Alisa Clickenger**

When planning a long overland journey by motorcycle, budget plays a significant part. Finances will often determine choice of motorcycle, length of trip, types of accommodations, as well as the daily routine. However, you don't need lots of money to pull off a round-the-world journey or a long overland trip.

Smart budgeting can save expense and enable travel to the far ends of the Earth. A big adventure on a small budget is more than possible.

When it comes to motorcycles, there is an incredible diversity of choices available. From big adventure-ready

machines to smaller dual-sports, older sport-touring bikes and even scooters, there is a wide spectrum to pick from.

While it can be tempting to aim for the newest, shiniest bike, consider your priorities first. Would you rather spend \$15,000 on a brand-new motorcycle and travel for a month, or buy a used bike for \$5,000 and travel for 10 months instead?

Neither choice is wrong, they are simply different. It pays to figure out which choices make the most sense to you. Do you absolutely need the comfort of a large touring bike, or can you make do with something smaller and significantly more economical? Jot down your financial resources and your priorities, see where they inter-

sect, and then choose a motorcycle accordingly.

Standards and cost of living vary widely in different countries and on different continents. In Switzerland, fuel costs \$8 a gallon, and a restaurant meal is at least \$50. In comparison, it's \$3.85 per gallon of gas and \$10 for dinner in Peru.

Like choosing a motorcycle, when it comes to destinations, think about your priorities first. Generally, Central and South America, Asia and parts of Africa are ideal for budget travel, as most of the countries have a significantly lower cost of living. North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, on the other hand, will be

much more expensive to travel.

After choosing a destination, try to plan the cheapest route. A good rule of thumb is to cover a large land mass, for example: Alaska to Ushuaia, Argentina; North Cape, Norway, to Cape Town, Africa; or Vladivostok, Russia, to Lisbon, Portugal. This will save on expensive motorcycle shipping and flights.

Don't forget to include major cities along the route, even if you prefer to head off into the wilderness and ride off-road. Chances are you will need spare motorcycle parts, tires, or gear replacements along the way. It's much cheaper to visit local dealerships than to have things shipped to you in some nameless village in the Mongolian steppe!

Life on the road isn't without challenges, and sticking to a tight daily budget is certainly one of them. The key to a successful adventure is not to feel deprived, because it often leads to overspending and indulging when you can't afford to, even though it's counterintuitive.

A tight budget doesn't have to include sleeping in barns and eating ramen noodles, but it will require creativity. If you are craving a steak dinner, but can't afford \$40 or more for restaurant service, find a local butcher shop and cook it yourself. You'll have the tasty meal and save at least 40 percent.

Do you want to go on that awesome safari that's way beyond your means? Barter with the organizers by volunteering to help the guides during the trip or clean the cars afterward. When fatigued and dying to rest in a comfortable hotel for a few days, offer them photography or a mention in your blog instead of cash. One hairdresser I know offers every proprietor a haircut, for the exact amount of that night's lodging.

Finally, splurge occasionally if you

need a morale boost, but make sure it's maximum satisfaction for minimal expense. For example, if you are addicted to lattes and \$4 a cup equals an hour of unadulterated bliss, indulge occasionally.

However, \$40 for a new pair of jeans and a temporary self-confidence boost is not the best idea. Besides, there's no space for extra stuff on the bike.

Even if you can't or don't want to plan, look to score bargains online. Airbnb can save lots of money over hotels, especially in bigger cities. If you're traveling with others, renting a house or apartment and splitting the cost can be even more significant. Scout out campgrounds and other traveler hot spots in town to find out about cheap accommodations or opt in to a share.

Other travelers are always a useful source of cheap travel and sharing ideas. I frequent HorizonsUnlimited.com and ADVRider.com online forums, not only to gather travel intel, but also to look for shares. Because I was posting a ride report on my trip as I traveled and was maintaining a blog, I received heaps of invites from locals along the way. The people connections turned out to be the highlight of the trip for me.

Another way to save money is to do things yourself. Learning basic motorcycle maintenance is a great cost saver. Even if you aren't mechanically minded,

simple things like changing the oil, chain maintenance, and cleaning the air filter will save a bundle on service fees.

Carry basic cooking gear and prepare your own meals. You'll save money and it will also be easier to stick to a healthy diet. Stay in hostels with a safe place to store your bike and a community kitchen stocked with niceties like cooking oil and spices. Campers can pitch a tent in the wild to save money on lodging and campground fees.

When the budget starts dwindling, but you're not ready to go home, earn some money while traveling. Online freelancing, teaching English or performing odd jobs as you go are all viable options. It shouldn't require full-time work to continue travel. Pick up a few hours of translation or transcription work online, design websites, sell stock photography or freelance as a tour guide. Think creatively, put the word out and apply your skills and knowledge to generate income while traveling.

A round-the-world journey does not have to be completed in one go. If you can't afford to disappear for months or years, separate the journey into stages. Ride to the first destination, store your motorcycle and fly back home to work. Then, pick up where you left off. You will see the world on your own terms and can keep your job or business going. This is also great if you have family commitments and leaving for extended periods of time is not an option.

Long-term adventure travel doesn't have to be expensive. People have traveled the world on motorcycles for \$15 a day. Smaller budgets do not equal less adventure, they simply require more creativity. Be honest with yourself in deciding what level of comfort is required. Wants and needs aren't usually the same. Plan the trip of your dreams, then roll out. **MCN**



Doing your own cooking is a great way to save money, especially in places like Switzerland, where you'll often pay \$50 for dinner in a restaurant.