

BEYOND

FLY AND RIDE

The ins and outs of destination adventures.

> By **Alisa Clickenger**

Motorcycle adventures are one of the best ways to vacation and escape from the daily grind. Yet, very few riders can afford to take off for weeks or months to refresh and seek out new horizons. Enter fly and ride adventures. Fly to a destination, rent a bike, ride around, return the bike and fly home. Travel long distances quickly, without the hassle or expense of arranging for your bike to be shipped there and back.

Fly and ride adventures have become extremely popular around the world. Combine affordable airfare with the many motorcycle rental and tour companies cropping up everywhere, and a fly and ride becomes a great way to experience an adventure anywhere.

As with most motorcycle adventures, planning a fly and ride begins with choosing a destination. Picking where to go is half the fun. Some riders put a finger on a map. Others prefer to thoroughly research and compare options before committing. Many riders seek recommendations from other adventurers online, to generate dream trip ideas.

Wherever you decide to go, be sure to check the local weather conditions. For example, early spring is a wonderful time to ride in Arizona and New Mexico, but can still be very cold in the Rockies, and roads may still be closed. When traveling abroad, check the climate at the destination for that specific time of year and decide accordingly.

Another important factor is to check the terrain and make sure it's compatible with your riding style. When seeking canyon carving or mountain twisties, the American Midwest probably isn't the best place to travel to. Equally, if you prefer to cruise along on well main-



It's easy to rent motorcycles practically anywhere.

tained highways, some of the Andean or Himalayan passes may not be for you.

Match your riding preferences with what you want to see or do on your trip. Options might include national parks, historical sites, hiking, dining, beaches,

sunsets, or perhaps even extreme sports like bungee jumping, whitewater rafting or paragliding. A motorcycle rental makes for much wider and more flexible accessibility at the destination.

A quick internet search will identify

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how many motorcycle tour and rental companies there are in any area of interest, as well as what sort of bikes they offer, and any tour packages available.

Some companies only offer rentals and guided tours. Others may include self-guided tours, which typically consist of riding alone, with a programmed GPS, following a designed route. These types of packages may even include hotels and meals booked along the way, depending on the operator.

If budget is a factor, try traveling off-season. If traveling with friends, ask for a group discount. Most motorcycle rental companies don't charge extra for a passenger, except for meals and stays when part of a prepaid package. Discounts and deals may be harder to come by when flying solo, but more social riders can join an existing group. Online forums and social media are great places to look for riding buddies.

Like your destination, the chosen bike should reflect both the terrain and level of adventure you're seeking. Choose a comfortable cruiser for highways and well-maintained main roads, or something sportier for twisties. If you're planning to hit some off-road trails, aim for a dual-sport or adventure motorcycle. Picking a motorcycle similar to your own will make you more comfortable and confident in unfamiliar territory. Rentals are also a fantastic way for experienced riders to try something new.

In addition to searching for bike rentals online, you can also ask the riding community. Ask local riders in the area which company they would recommend and why. Heed any reviews found. If the company doesn't have a good reputation, it's probably best to book elsewhere.

Packing for a fly and ride motorcycle trip is another aspect of the adventure. It can be daunting to figure out if everything will fit on a rented bike, especially if it's a model you're unfamiliar with. It's always best to pack lighter and less, whether you're trekking for the first or the hundredth time.

Regardless the destination and duration of any trip, the less you pack, the better you'll feel. Bring a couple of changes



of clothing, basic toiletries, medication, a pocket camera, essential tools, a small first-aid kit, rain gear and your phone. Throw in camping and cooking gear only if you're planning on that type of trip.

It's hard to make sure you've got the essentials without overpacking. ATMs, shopping malls, grocers and pharmacies exist all over the world. If you find yourself missing something, simply buy it at the destination. Necessities can be found almost anywhere in the world.

A helpful practice is to lay everything out on a flat surface and take a complete inventory. Try to minimize bulk by using compression bags and tubes, rolling clothes, and using quality camping gear that packs much lighter and smaller. Packing extra dry bags in various sizes creates some flexibility in packing panniers on a rental bike. They also help with keeping dirty laundry separate and can double as a pillow, for the minimalist.

Be sure to purchase medical, travel and motorcycle insurance for fly and ride trips. If you are planning to join a guided tour, most organizers have suggestions as part of their package. If you are going solo to a foreign country, ask the rental company about roadside assistance, and know who to call if you get into trouble. It's also smart to share your detailed plans with friends and family. Let them know the exact route you will be riding and check in daily.

Carrying all the motorcycle safety apparel to a far-flung destination can be a hassle. A motorcycle jacket, pants and boots can be worn on a flight or packed, but I always carry my helmet with me, because it is often required to wear one. You also may not be able to find a perfectly fitting, quality helmet that meets your safety standards at a given destination. It's also more sanitary than renting one.

If you buy too many souvenirs, one option is to leave the helmet behind at your destination. Many motorcyclists who vacation abroad donate their helmets to local riders, who might not be able to find or afford one of the same caliber.

A fly and ride adventure can be a great way to have the motorcycle trip of a lifetime, without having to spend weeks in the saddle traveling to your dream destination. With a little flexibility (a terrific trait in any traveler) in what and where you ride, you can create fantastic memories, even if you're short on vacation days.

With the proliferation of long-haul flights and motorcycle rental companies, there are countless riding opportunities all over the globe. Choose the perfect destination, do some research and book your adventure! **MCN**



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