**Motorcycle Camping**

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# Choosing what to pack

There is a minimum set of items that are essential to bring along that include basic shelter and warmth. You never know what weather may roll in. You may leave your house on a warm sunny day, only to find it is snowing on your campsite in the mountains that night. After you are sure you have the essentials, and you have room, you may start adding items to increase your comfort.

## Essentials

You have limited room to pack when camping from a motorcycle. Start with the essentials:

* Tent
* Air-mattress or foam pad
* Sleeping bag
* Light with fresh batteries. Adding a small back-up light is prudent.
* Small first aid (to include bug spray, afterbite, poison oak/ivy/ medicine)

## Nice to Have

After the essential items, move to the nice to have items:

* Camp chair
* Simple cooking - boil water
* Flip Flops to use in the public shower

## Luxuries

After the nice to have items come the luxuries:

* Advanced cooking gear: grill, coffee maker, cups, plates and, utensils
* Music on a portable speaker or musical instrument (a harmonica packs very small)
* Collapsible cooler
* Air blower for mattress

# Packing the Bike, Safety First

You need to be conscience of how much weight you pack and where you place that weight on your bike.

## Weight Capability and Distribution

Balance the gear’s weight evenly from side-to-side. Do not exceed the bike’s maximum weight limits. Add your gear’s weight, your own body weight and, riding gear weight. Compare this with weight limits defined in the bike’s user manual.

## Rider Ergonomics

You must be able to ride the bike safely and comfortably.

## Keeping Gear from Falling Off

You need to secure your gear to the bike. Gear falling off may ruin your gear, and may cause an accident. Gear flapping the wind may be damaged and is distractive. Another word to describe flapping gear would be maddening!

## Loading Saddle Bags

Bikes equipped with saddle bags make packing easier. Saddle bags are usually: weather resistant, make it easy to balance the load, and lock gear inside securely.

## Loading Dry Bags

If your bike does not have Saddle bags, another option is using dry bags. Dry bags come in many different sizes. You may purchase a dry bag large enough to fit the essentials. Fill the dry bag with your camping essentials and secure across the bike passenger seat, or rear luggage rack.

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| **Caution:** Avoid Using Bungee Cords. Nylon straps are a good choice for securing gear to a motorcycle. Nylon straps will not stretch out and have a much higher strength rating. Bungee cords are a poor choice for securing gear. Bungee cords will stretch out and have a lower strength rating. |

# Setting up Camp

You have arrived at the campground, paid for your site, purchased some wood, found the bathroom, and now you are ready to set up camp.

## Choosing a Spot to Camp

Look over the site carefully scanning for hazards. You do not want to set up your tent under a tree limb that is hanging precariously. Think about rain. If it were to rain heavily, where will the water flow and pool. Do not set up your tent in a low spot.

## Setting up Your Tent

Do not rush into setting up your tent. Take a moment to consider the wind direction, sun orientation, fire pit, and other campers when choosing the tent location and orientation.

## Setting up Your Sleeping Gear

Most people use an air mattress for insulation and comfort. When blowing up your mattress, an electric air pump feels like a luxury.

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| **Top-Tip:** Put all the stuff sacks, all your riding gear and, all your clothes in the tent now. If it starts to rain your gear will already be out of the weather. |

# Enjoy the Campsite

You have been riding all day. You have set up camp and now it is time to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

## Building a Fire

Sitting around the campfire is a wonderful part of camping. This is a good time to break out the food and music. Remember to be courteous to your neighbors and practice fire safety.

## Cooking Over the Fire

Preparation is the key. Prepare and bring items to cook. A great example is preparing a mix of potatoes, peppers, onions, butter, and other items in a pouch of aluminum foil to warm over the fire. Smores are another classic favorite camping treat. Hot dogs cooked on the end of a stick are simple and easy.

## Warning about Food and Wild Animals

Never bring any food into your tent. Research the area you will be camping to be aware of local wildlife.

# Getting a Good Night’s Sleep

Do not underestimate the importance of a good night’s sleep. Sleep deprivation will bring down the hardiest of people. It can ruin your trip. Worse, if you are sleep deprived riding a motorcycle, you could lose focus and get into an accident.

## Staying Warm

Staying warm at night is very important. Ensure your sleeping bag temperature rating is appropriate for the expected temperature. Note the temperature rating on a sleeping bag is the survival rating. Research the comfort rating for your bag. Your air mattress will also have a temperature rating.

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| **Top-Tip:** Put on dry clothes and socks when getting into bed. If it will be cold in the morning, bring the next day’s clothes into the sleeping bag with you. |

# Packing it All Up

You wake from a restful night’s sleep. After you have a cup of [cowboy coffee](https://lmgtfy.app/?q=cowboy+coffee), look at the map, and plan your ride for the day, it is time to pack it up.

## Packing Wet Gear

Your tent will likely be wet from dew, overnight rain, or condensation in the morning. You can move you tent out to a sunny spot and wait for it to dry. But you are taking away from limited riding time. It is OK to pack your tent wet. You may dry it at the next camp site, or when you get home take all your gear back out and thoroughly dry it prior to storage. Keep your wet gear separate from you dry gear; specifically, do not let your wet tent get your dry sleeping bag wet. A sleeping bag takes a long time to dry.

## Leaving No Trace

Follow the good camper rules: Do not take mementoes, leave them for the next camper to enjoy. Leave site as you found it or better. The golden rule: *Take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but tracks.*