



Things to watch out for when getting your bike serviced for Ladakh

Clutch Plates: It is essential to have clutch plates in good condition, before starting a ride to Ladakh; otherwise you can end up with a motorcycle, which refuses to climb steep hilly roads Ladakh has to offer. So make sure to get your clutch plates checked and replace them, if they have little life left in them.

Piston Rings: If your bike has been consuming engine oil lately; it is best to get the piston-cylinder kit checked for wear and tear and replace them if necessary. Also get the valves checked as well.

Timing Chain: Another thing you need to pay close attention to is a loose/worn out timing chain, which can end up causing mechanical failure during the ride or make your motorcycle perform sub optimally.

Drive Chain & Sprockets: Check drive chain and sprockets for wear, if the chain and/or sprockets are on the last lease of life, change the entire chain-sprocket set. Else get them cleaned and lubricated.

Suspensions: Riding on the harsh terrain of Ladakh with a bike loaded with rider and luggage can take a toll on the suspension of your motorcycle. Get the front and rear suspension checked, and if the need be, get them repaired/changed.

Swing arm bush: Get the swing arm bush checked for slackness, change if needed.

Air filter/spark plug: If your air filter and/or spark plug is over 10000kms old or approaching that figure, get them changed. Don't throw the old ones out, keep them as spares.

Clutch & Accelerator wires: If your Clutch and Accelerator wires are over 10000kms old, get them changed and keep the old ones as spare. If they are not in need of a change then get them lubricated.

Brake shoes/pads: Get the brake pads and shoes checked for wear, if they can't last for 5000kms, get them changed. Also get the brake fluid changed or top it up, if you had changed it recently.

Con Set: Con set is an essential part of the bike and if it's loose or worn out, it can affect the handling of the motorcycle. At the time of service get it checked and change it if the need be.

Engine oil/filter: If the engine oil is over 500kms old, get it changed. Also change the oil filter. In case your bike uses an oil strainer, get it cleaned.

Electrical and battery: Get all the electrical wiring checked, check all bulbs to see if they are functioning properly. Also clean the headlight seal beam and brake light to ensure better visibility. Also make sure your bike's battery is performing well, this is especially important if your motorcycle does not have kick start.

Fasten all nuts and bolts: Get all the nuts and bolts fastened properly, in case any is missing, get it installed.

Carburetor Tuning: Keep the Carburetor tuning as close to stock as possible. Running it rich will cause problem in high altitude areas and running it lean would lead to overheating in plains.

General check: Give everything a once over, ensure that everything is working properly and all the fluids are topped up, i.e. battery water, engine oil etc. Ensure all fuel lines are intact and there is no leakage anywhere.

Tyres: Check both tyres for wear and signs of cuts and cracks. If either of them is nearing the end of their life, get them changed. If you need to change tyres, get dual purpose tyres, since they perform well on and off road.

Wheel alignment: In case your motorcycle has spoke wheels, get them checked, and if the need be, get them aligned before your ride.

Learn minor repair/servicing

If you have gone through the above routine, your bike should hold through for the entire trip, but it's a good idea to ask your motorcycle mechanic to teach you minor chores like tightening rear brakes, adjusting clutch and accelerator play, adjusting chain, fixing puncture, replacing bulbs and changing accelerator/clutch cable/levers.

Final checks on the D-Day and beyond:

Now that you have prepared your motorcycle for Ladakh, and are ready to start your ride, there are a few checks you need to perform daily.

Check if all lights, horn and indicators are working.

Double check fluid levels such as engine oil, brake oil and coolant (in case of liquid cooled motorcycles).

Check tyres for air pressure as well as look for any signs of puncture or damage.

Check if chain is lubricated properly and isn't too tight or too loose.

Check for any leakages.

List of essential tools, spares and motorcycle documents to carry

Although it is recommended to learn basic repair of your motorcycle, even if you don't know much, it is generally a good idea to carry necessary tools and spares. Since sometime even in the smallest of town, you can find a mechanic or someone who knows how to do basic repairs, but might not have the required tool or spares to go through it.

Essential tools:

- 1. Tool kit:** OEM tool kit that comes with motorcycle is an essential part of the tool kit that every tourer should carry.
- 2. Ring spanners size 8 to 17:** Should come in handy for tightening nuts and bolts of various sizes.

- 3. Screw Driver set:** Try to carry a screwdriver set which has multiple attachments; a set which also includes a set of Allen keys is a good choice. While purchasing screwdriver set, ensure you get one which is sturdiest of the lot and won't break while you are tightening or opening something.
- 4. Steel wire:** Can be used to tie together bike parts in case of any breakage.
- 5. Electrical & Scotch tape:** Can be used for tying together various parts and insulating damaged wires.
- 6. Torch light:** In case of break down in the evening or early in the morning you will need it to see your bike, even once you are off your bike it can prove quite useful.
- 7. Foot or Electric air pump:** Since motorcyclists don't have the luxury of carrying a spare tyre, an electric or foot pump combined with a puncture repair kit and spare tube can turn out to be a life saver.
- 8. Puncture repair kit:** Puncture repair kit for tyres with tubes should consist of, rubber patches, solution for pasting the patches on tube and tyre iron for taking off the tyre from the rim. In case of tubeless tyres, purchase a tubeless puncture repair kit.

Essential Spares

- 1. Engine oil:** Carry at least half a liter of engine oil recommended by your motorcycle manufacturer, daily check engine oil level and top up if necessary.
- 2. 90w Gear oil:** Can be used to lubricate drive chain, in case you prefer to use WD 40 or chain spray, please carry that.
- 3. Headlight and brake light bulb:** Always carry spare headlight and brake light bulb.
- 4. Chain links:** Carry couple of chain links, in case your drive chain breaks due to something, you can fix it and ride on.
- 5. Clutch and front brake lever:** In case of a fall clutch/front brake lever can break, which can make riding motorcycle difficult. Hence it is best to carry each of these as spare, to ensure you can ride with ease.
- 6. Clutch and accelerator wires:** Clutch and Accelerator wires have a habit of snapping in the middle of nowhere, so please carry a spare clutch and accelerator wire.
- 7. Spare tube for front and rear tyre:** Carrying a spare tube for both the tyres will ensure that in case of a puncture you wouldn't have to waste your time trying to repair the punctured tube and can simply change the tube and continue riding. In case your motorcycle has tubeless tyre, carrying a spare tube is still a good idea, since it can help you ride your motorcycle, even if the rim bends a little, causing air to escape from tubeless tyre.
- 8. Spark plug:** Although spark plugs of modern motorcycles rarely give problem, it is a good idea to carry a spare one.
- 9. Spare key of your motorcycle:** Always carry a spare key of your motorcycle and never put both the keys in the same place!
- 10. Spare Fuse:** A blown fuse can leave your motorcycle without headlight and/or horn, so don't forget to carry one with you.
- 11. WD40:** Can be used to lubricate and clean various mechanical and electrical parts of the motorcycle.
- 12. Nylon Rope:** Can be used for tying together various parts of your motorcycle or to help you tow your friend's motorcycle or help someone else tow yours.
- 13. Bungee cords:** Helps in tying the luggage, always carry couple of spare ones since they can snap under pressure.
- 14. Electrical wire:** Can be used to replace faulty electrical wire in the wiring.
- 15. Few nuts and bolts of various sizes:** Based on your motorcycles make, carry nuts and bolts which hold parts like

exhaust, leg guard, foot pegs etc.

16. Petrol pipe: If you run out of petrol and come across someone who is willing to lend some petrol to you, you will need it to take petrol out of their petrol tank.

17. Coolant: If your motorcycle is liquid cooled, make sure to carry little bit of coolant with you.

If you own a CI Engine Royal Enfield Bullet, also carry 250ml clutch oil and a decompressor cable.

In case any of your motorcycles parts have a history of ditching you in the middle of nowhere, it would be a good idea to carry it as spare.

Essential documents:

1. Driving license
2. Registration Papers of the bike
3. Insurance certificate
4. Pollution under control certificate

Carry two – three copies of the above mentioned documents; generally you should have photocopies of Registration certificate and Insurance certificate handy, while the original should be kept in safe yet accessible place. In case of photocopies, they would have to be attested by a gazetted officer in order to hold any value. You should always have your original license and PUC certificate handy as well.

In case you have any queries about preparing your motorcycle for Ladakh, please post a message [here](#).

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