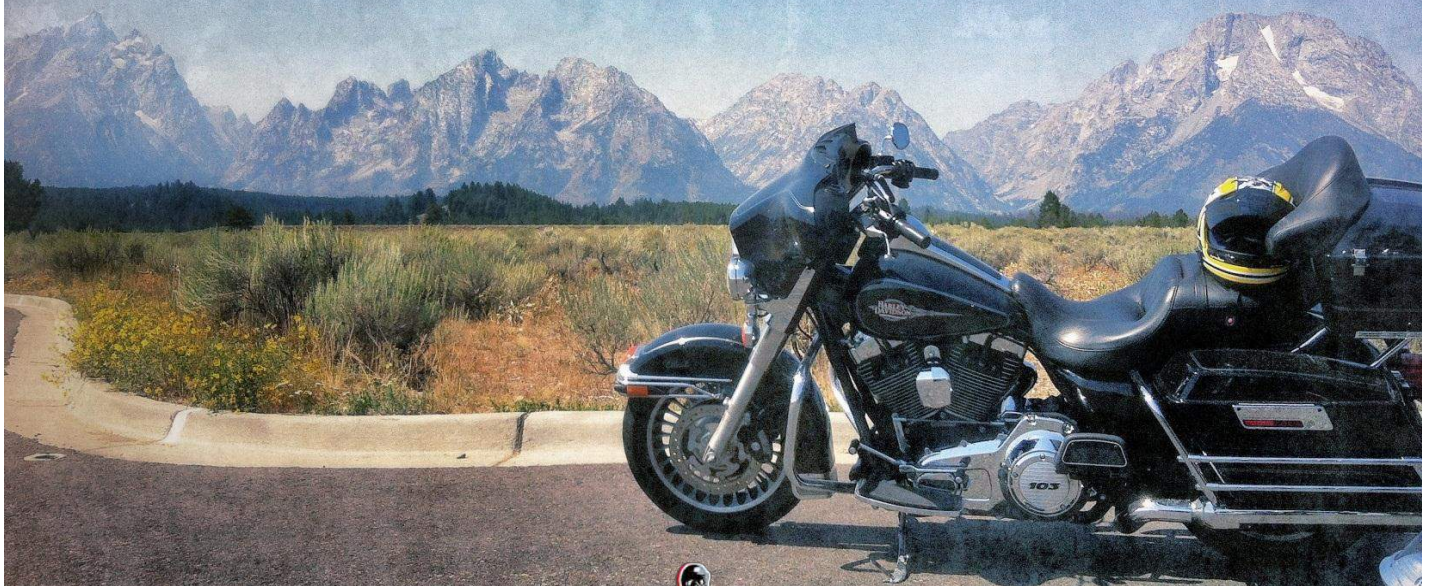


A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

- ☐ Safety tips while on the road in the USA
- ☐ 50 Tips For Riding A Motorcycle Across America
- ☐ How to Pack for A Motorcycle Tour
- ☐ Keep Your Bike and Gear From Being Stolen While Touring
- ☐ Tips for renting a motorcycle in America
- ☐ Which Harley Should I Choose For My Tour?



A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Table of Content

Safety tips while on the road in the USA	3
50 Tips For Riding A Motorcycle Across America	10
How to Pack for A Motorcycle Tour	14
Keep Your Bike and Gear From Being Stolen While Touring	17
Tips for renting a motorcycle in America	20
Which Harley Should I Choose For My Tour?	22

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

OVER 1 MILLION MILES OF EXPERIENCE

Safety Tips While on the Road in the USA

This list is not meant to cover all aspects of motorcycle safety. It is meant to alert you to the specific differences and therefore dangers and hazards you may come across while on the road in America. Many of the points may also be relevant to your home country but over years of riding with others in America these are the points we see consistently causing problems

To bring this guide to you we have asked an experienced group of tour guides to comment and make their additions bringing you over a Million miles of experience much of it ridden with groups.



Tim Orr

Riding: 28 years

Miles ridden: Approx 360k



Jeff Homer

Riding: 25 Years

Miles ridden: Approx 300k



Laura O'Brian (Lala)

Riding: 10 Years

Miles ridden: 200k



Steve Feather

Riding: Forever

Miles ridden: 400+k

Even with our level of experience there are still things we will have missed but hopefully keeping the following tips and advice in mind will help you relax and enjoy your riding while at the same time staying safe!

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Ride on the Right

- Possibly the biggest risk for those from countries who ride on the left and probably the hardest to guard against. It's so obvious that it's easy to forget. Chances are you'll be very aware when you pick up the bike and when in busy traffic situations but the time you'll make the mistake is on a quiet back road after a stop, when you're feeling relaxed. This is the time you need to be especially aware.
- We find that continually reminding each other helps. Some people use visual reminders like an arrow sticker on the clocks. A good one that works for us is to think about keeping the throttle to the curb. A combination of all the above is probably the best policy.

Stop Lights

- Stoplights in America have one major difference from the UK and Europe. The lights themselves are more often than not positioned on the far side of the junction. If you don't spot this before you pull up it can result in some pretty heavy breaking or a stop in the middle of the junction.

Right turn on Red

- In many cases if you are turning right at a stoplight you are ok to turn even if the light is red. Vehicles approaching from the left still have right of way so you treat it like a regular junction. Be especially careful if following others as it's easy to see the bike in front make the turn and forget you don't have right of way. Look out for signs saying "No Right Turn on Red".

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Four-Way Stops

- By far the most common junction in America and the cause of the most confusion. A four-way stop is what America has instead of roundabouts. They work like this: 4 vehicles arrive at the junction, all riders/drivers judge who got there first and then let each other go in order of who arrived first. If everyone arrives at the same time the vehicle to the right has right of way. People do not always follow these rules so once you get to the junction if you're unsure pull away slowly and be ready to stop. If there's a group of you often the other drivers will waive you through. When riding as a group we usually tend to go in pairs. Best approach is to pay attention and be cautious.

Unmarked Intersection

- While rare, these intersections can appear in residential areas. An unmarked intersection is a crossroads that has no priority right of way. That means no one has a stop sign. So when riding in residential areas pay attention to whether or not the streets entering your street have stop signs. If they don't it is priority to the right. Luckily you will not encounter these junctions on highways or major roads but if you're riding the back streets of a town, beware!

Distracted Driving Texting and Phoning on the Road!

- This is now an epidemic the world over and for the most part it's no worse in the US than in any other country. However, America has been much slower to introduce laws against it. Texting is now illegal in most States but phoning is still widely accepted and not always against the law.
- Our advice is to be doubly aware when in built up areas. (California is noticeably worse than other states) and as always, ride defensively.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Passing Trucks

- The picture says it all. Although the blind spot position might change from truck to truck there is a good chance that at some point when passing a truck that the driver will not be able to see you. The best way to avoid this is by giving the truck as much space as possible and passing quickly.



Be aware that cruise control can leave you stuck next to a truck for far longer than is necessary or safe. Trucks in America travel at far higher speeds than in Europe and many other parts of the world so passing, especially on 2 lane roads takes a lot more attention.

Hard Shoulder / Shoulder.

- This is a dangerous place anywhere in the world and is to be avoided if at all possible. The edges of the roads in America are not kept as clear of debris as they are in Europe. We can attribute nearly every puncture we have had on tours with a pull up on the hard shoulder. So if at all possible avoid stopping on the edge of the road. If you have no choice keep a good eye on the surface and travel as short a distance as possible once on the shoulder. Once stopped leave your bike and get as far from the road as you need to be safe. Do not sit on your bike while waiting.



A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Frontage Roads

- This is really only an issue in Texas but there are other states where it happens and if you don't know about it can be one of the most dangerous situations you will encounter. In Texas Route 66 runs along side the Freeway as a "Frontage Road" however here the big difference is that traffic entering and leaving the Freeway has right of way over traffic on the Frontage road. That means when riding to the left of the Freeway cars may turn across in front of you to join the Freeway. When riding on the right you have to be aware of cars cutting across from the left and behind you to exit the Freeway. Some of these rights of way are well signed but others have no more than a sun bleached YEILD sign and are very easy to miss.

If you are stopped by the Police

- When pulled over by the police make your way to the side of the road as soon as it is safe to do so. Switch off your engine and stay seated on your bike with your hands on the bars. Listen to what you are told and do exactly what is asked of you. Under no circumstances should you get off the bike and approach the police officer unless asked to do so.

Orientation

- On picking up your bike you will be given a thorough orientation of the bike. Make sure you listen to this as the guys and girls at the pick up locations generally have not only great knowledge of the bikes but also of the area. If you're not sure about anything or you feel they weren't clear ask them again. They won't mind and it can stop potential problems.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Distraction

- By the very nature of renting a bike or taking a tour you are going to be riding in areas full of distractions. Make a conscious effort to save the sightseeing to the stops. Of course as you travel you will see a lot but on a twisty road it's all too easy to get distracted by an amazing view. If the area you are in is beautiful stop more often and enjoy taking time. You're on holiday after all and don't need to rush through these areas. Save that for the commute to work.

Ride in a Staggered Formation and Group Riding

- When riding as a group a staggered formation works best especially at getting a group through a town with traffic lights. You should ride with a minimum of 2 seconds distance to the bike in front and 1 second to the bike in the opposite position to you. These timing gaps are for a group that is confident riding together. I find with a new group or when speeds are higher 2 or 3 second gaps give more room for manoeuvre. When pulling up to stop lights the best way to get a group through is for everyone to pull up side by side and then re-establish the gaps once through the light. When the road gets twisty always swap to single file and let the distance extend.
- When riding in a group try and hold your position. Dropping back and wandering across the lane causes the group to separate and is very frustrating for the riders behind you.
- When riding as a group the use of hand signals is very important especially for pointing out hazards in the road as riding within the group your forward vision is somewhat restricted. Before you start riding make sure you are all aware of at least the basic signals:
 - Left Turn
 - Right Turn

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

- Staged Formation
- Single File
- Foot Signals:
 - Obstacle in the road (left or right leg dependent on which side you are on)
 - Important: Only riders should give foot signals as it's easy for a pillion to misjudge and hit the obstacle with their foot.

USEFULL LINKS AND NUMBERS:

<http://www.americanmotorcyclist.com/Rights/State-Laws.aspx>

EMERGENCY NUMBER **911**



A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

50 Tips For Riding A Motorcycle Across America

Crossing America on a motorcycle is the dream of many a rider. There's something romantic about traversing the USA on two wheels, perhaps because it's fairly challenging due to the sheer stamina required to ride 4,000 miles. There's a lot to consider when planning a coast to coast trip – do you use your own bike or rent one? How will you get back home when the ride's done? What should you bring and what should you leave at home? How long should you take and what route?

We've ridden across America several times and have compiled some of the things we've learned in the list of tips below. Have any questions? [Drop us a line.](#)

Thinking of hiring a bike and doing the trip yourself? [Definitely contact us,](#) we'll get you the most competitive rental rate and help you plan your trip.

So here goes, 50 Tips for Riding A Motorcycle Across America:

1. Stop putting it off, life is short! Don't forestall joy.
2. America is a lot bigger than you thought.
3. Take at least two weeks to do the ride, ideally more (see #2).
4. When choosing a bike, bigger/more expensive does not automatically = more fun.
5. Regarding accessories: more farkles = more distractions = less fun.
6. Interstates = ZERO FUN.
7. Interstates save time, but do you really want the trip to end sooner?
8. Make sure your tires have at least 3-4000 miles of life left in them.
9. If you ride a sportbike, they won't!
10. If you can read a map, you don't need a GPS unit. Plus maps look better with coffee spilt on them.
11. Michelin maps are the best and most detailed, get them from Amazon.com.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

12. If you're riding in summer, buy a cooling vest, they're awesome.
13. Bring earplugs and don't be lazy about wearing them if you value your hearing.
14. Pack light. Once you've packed go back in and get rid of at least 25%. Do this again if your on a Bonnie, Indian Scout or Fat Boy.
15. Use quick dry underwear for the day and wash it in the shower every night. It'll be dry by the morning and cuts out a lot of clothing that you'll need to carry.
16. If you overdo the cutting back you can always buy something when you're there.
17. Think about taking all your old clothes with you and just bin them as you go. You then have an empty case to travel home with.
18. Make sure to note the names/locations of the places that resonate in you.
19. Blog about your trip while on the road (if you do that kind of thing).
20. Don't over plan your ride. Have an idea of where you want to go but leave the detail until you're on the road. You'll soon get to love the feeling of not knowing where you're going to sleep that night when you wake up. If it goes wrong (which it undoubtedly will at some point) you get the best story of the trip.
21. Did we mention pack light.
22. Learn about how to raise money for charity by contacting the charity (they often have instructions on their website).
23. Use a smartphone with GPS so you can easily geotag photos.
24. When you upload your pics to Flickr etc, use the geotags so people know where the photo was taken.
25. In some rural parts of the country, cell reception will be non existent.
26. Best months to cross the USA on a motorcycle: May to October.
27. If you bring rain gear or heated clothing, you won't need it.
28. If you don't bring it, it will be cold and pouring every day of your trip.
29. Weather band radio is very useful, especially during tornado season in the midwest.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

30. Hi-viz bike clothing makes you look like a tool whether you're in NYC or Yellowstone.
31. If you set up camp in known grizzly bear country and play acoustic versions of Death Cab For Cutie songs by the fire before going to bed, you 100% deserve to get mauled.
32. It's a long ride and you'll be tired at day's end. Motorcycle camping is for the young, the poor and the acutely adventurous.
33. For everyone else, Best Western, Motel 6 and Super 8 are the better choice.
34. Breakfast buffets in America are almost always overpriced and underwhelming.
35. Eat a light breakfast, light lunch with healthy snacks as needed until dinner.
36. Save the heavier meals for nighttime.
37. Do not drink any alcohol until after the bike is parked for the day.
38. If you ride a Triumph Bonneville, old guys are going to come up and tell you about their old Trumpets every time you stop.
39. Music that goes well with a Cross USA ride: The Band, Bob Dylan, [Bryan Adams](#), Wilco, Eric Clapton, Willie Nelson, Mark Knopfler, Jackson Browne, Emmylou Harris, Lucinda Williams, Ry Cooder and The Grateful Dead. Music that does NOT go well with a Cross USA ride: Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Leona Lewis, Ke\$sha, Jay-Z and Justin Beiber. Or anything from "Glee".
40. Which books you bring are important. Books about traveling seem to read really well on long trips, especially if you're riding alone.
41. Books we like: [Paul Theroux's](#) "The Great Railway Bazaar"; [Ted Simon's](#) "Jupiter's Travels"; "One Man Caravan" by [Robert Edison Fulton Junior](#), or "Bonneville Go Or Bust" by [Zoe Cano](#). Another obvious choice would be anything by [Bill Bryson](#).
42. Go to bed early (by 10pm) and be on the road no later than 7:00am. It's a treasure to watch the world wake up, as an observer, on a motorcycle.
43. You'll take your best photos around dawn and dusk, that's when the light is best. Think about that when you're deciding where you're going to be at those times.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

44. If you can take a month or longer for the trip, using your own bike makes sense financially versus renting. But remember that you have to get your bike back home once you reach the opposite coast. Shipping can be expensive and it may take several weeks to get your bike back.
45. East to West or West To East? Well, America “opens up” as you head East to West. West to East it gets more congested and populated. Psychologically; East to West “feels” a bit better because of that.
46. Northern or Southern route? Great things to see if you use either...some suggestions follow.
47. Start in Boston. Head down through New York State, over to Chicago, the Black Hills of South Dakota, Salt Lake City, finish in San Francisco.
48. Start in Washington DC. Head down the Blue Ridge Parkway into the Smokey Mountains, over to Nashville, then pick up Route 66 in Oklahoma and follow it to Los Angeles.
49. Start in Los Angeles, follow Route 66 in reverse to Texas, then head to the Gulf Coast, see New Orleans, finish in Orlando Florida.
50. Rent an EagleRider bike from The Lost Adventure! We’ve got the most competitive rates, we’ve ridden Coast To Coast several times and can give you tips and advice to help you plan your journey. We can book your hotels too.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

How to Pack for A Motorcycle Tour

Recently, one of our customers who's going on a two week tour asked us about fitted pannier bags. He'll be riding either a Honda Gold Wing GL1800 or a Harley Davidson Electra Glide. Both have topcases and hard panniers.

Was there a fitted bag that would fit both, he wondered? The answer is not really. The big touring bikes all have different pannier shapes and capacities, making it impossible to find a bag that will fit all of them and not waste space. A quick Google search of the terms "fitted pannier bags" or "motorcycle luggage" reveal a dizzying array of bags that are highly specific in their application, but no "one size fits all bag".

So if you're going to another country on a hired motorcycle tour for a couple of weeks, what do you do about bags? Here are our thoughts on How To Pack For A Motorcycle Tour.

Firstly, if you're on a Guided Tour (such as those we sell), you've got no worries, there's typically a support vehicle that carries all your bags. Even if you have large suitcases for you and your pillion, there's no bother, it will ride in the van. If you're planning on staying a few days somewhere after your tour, this is all the more reason to do a Guided Tour.

But if you're hiring a bike, especially if you're bringing a pillion, you're going to have to pack very wisely. Fitted bags typically don't come with hire bikes and they'll waste much needed space if they're not made for that exact model bike. We would not recommend the purchase of fitted bags for a specific hire bike (like a GL1800) unless you own that same bike back home. Fitted bags are usually quite costly, not a good option if you're budget conscious in the slightest.

What we usually do is get a small canvas or faux leather bag that's very flexible, with no frame, which will conform to the shape of the panniers. We bring plastic bags and put underwear, socks and other things we don't mind getting wrinkled at the bottom of the panniers, then put the canvas bag on top.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Sometimes we leave the plastic bags at the bottom of the panniers until they're needed – so the first few days of socks and underwear on one side, some t-shirts on the other, things we'll need sooner on top, then a canvas bag with things we don't want wrinkled or that are fragile in the topcase.

Another way to pack efficiently is via “planned disposability”. Bring old, worn out t-shirts and underwear on your tour. When they get dirty, bin them! It's a wonderful thing to have your load get lighter as your trip goes on, plus you have more room for souvenirs. If you need new stuff, you can always stop into a Target, Wal-Mart or K-Mart and buy everything from underwear to hygiene products, at bargain prices. And these stores are commonly located in or near most American cities.

We are all guilty of buying too much stuff in advance of a trip, then dragging it along with regret after we realize we just didn't need it.

Here are things we consider absolutely essential to pack on an extended motorcycle tour:

1) First Aid Kit: Make sure you get one with sunburn creme, antiseptic, bandages and other basic First Aid necessities. We're amazed how often our friends pack a collection of electronic gadgets and nothing to deal with even sunburn or an insect bite. Don't buy a cheap one, they always seem to be overloaded with band-aids and nothing else too useful. Oh, and make sure to bring sunglasses as well.

2) Maps: We'll take a good map over a GPS unit anytime. Of course, it's a luxury to have both, but the ability to get a larger sense of where you are and where you're going will only be provided by a map. And We've seen many instances where GPS units seem to be lacking in common sense about how to get somewhere. Plus, when you get back home, your map will be written on, there will be coffee, beer, food and rain on it, and it will be a lasting treasure from your tour. We always prefer [Michelin maps](#), as they're utterly reliable, visually cool and printed on high quality paper. For travel in the USA, the [Rand McNally Road Atlas](#) is recommended as well.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

3) Bottled Water, At Least a Litre Per Person At All Times: It is critical that you are properly hydrated when riding a motorcycle. When you get dehydrated, fatigue sets in and it's all downhill from there. You should not wait until you're thirsty to drink, by then you're behind the eight ball. Keep an adequate water supply on the bike at all times and make stops as necessary to refresh yourself. Healthy snacks like granola bars or fruit are a good idea too. Riding in the summer? Read our article about how to deal with the heat [here](#).

4) Something to Recharge Your Cell Phone: This is hugely important – some of the best riding in America is in low traffic/sparsely populated areas. If you need help, you'll need a fully charged cellphone. If you're taking videos and photos on your smartphone, the battery will drain down quickly. There are many options on the market for recharging your cell without a wall outlet – we highly recommend you buy one for your trip.

5) Small packet of Microfiber Towels: For cleaning helmets and windscreens, nothing beats a microfiber towel. Keep a small package in your topcase and use some bottled water to moisten the towel. The slightest moisture really helps the microfiber towels clean perspex. They're washable, but don't put them in the dryer as that ruins them.

With the five things listed above, our riding kit, a pair of jeans and a few changes of underwear, we've ridden Coast To Coast across America. Mind you, we looked and smelled like the dog's dinner at the end of the tour! But the point is, you don't need to bring that much stuff with you when you tour. If you have a pillion, if your partner is along for a wonderful holiday, then again, we'd suggest a Guided Tour, as really that's the easiest way to do a tour. Of course, don't let limited pannier space scare you off having an adventure.

If you're interested in hiring a motorcycle to tour America or want to do a Guided Tour, [contact us](#). We're an Official EagleRider Agent and we've got great prices on motorcycle hire and tours, including Route 66, the Wild West, Coast to Coast, Florida and others. Thanks for reading!

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Keep Your Bike and Gear From Being Stolen While Touring

Most people you'll meet on the road riding in America are wonderful – helpful, friendly, happy to meet you and really pleased you've come here to experience the USA. You'll feel safe most everywhere you go. Unfortunately, no matter where you travel in the world, there are some people who take advantage of others. A long way from home, you can't afford to lose anything to prying hands, least of all your motorcycle. So how do you keep your bike and gear from being stolen while touring? Here are our tips.

1) Always Lock Your Bike When You Leave It. It's amazing to us how many experienced riders leave their bikes sitting with the keys in the ignition and walk away or don't bother to lock their forks or panniers. It only takes a few seconds for someone to nick an unlocked bike. Be smart – if you're going to be out of sight of your bike, lock it up.

2) Bring The Proper Locks. Make sure you've got a good quality Disk Lock and either a chain or cable lock with your bike. Know that professional thieves can defeat these locks easily; but they'll deter amateur thieves and they'll at least buy you some time with the pros. If a thief has to make noise or do something that might draw attention to himself to steal your bike, someone might notice and intervene or he might move on to an easier target. Consider locks to be just deterrents, never kid yourself into thinking your bike can't be stolen just because you've locked it. (Note: cable and disk locks are typically provided with every [rental, so if we sort a bike for you](#) there's no need to bring your own.)

3) Don't Leave Valuables Sitting On The Bike. We've seen riders with GPS units, mobile phones & £500 helmets on their handlebars go into a cafe for an hour, leaving everything unsupervised – not smart! Someone could throw your helmet into the back of a car and it would be gone in ten seconds and you'd be stuck looking for another. If you have to leave the bike, have a mate watch your stuff or take your valuables with you until you return.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

4) Run A Cable Lock Through Your Helmet And The Bike If You Don't Want To Take It.

Let's face it, sometimes it's a bother dragging your helmet around everywhere, especially if you've got to use the toilet. If you've got a full face helmet, run your cable lock through the visor hole above the chin piece, then run the cable through something hard like a frame loop on your bike and lock it. This way, your helmet's not going anywhere. Keep in mind the helmet can get very hot sitting out in the sun, so covering it with the helmet bag most manufacturers supply is a good idea.

5) Park Smart At Night. When you park the bikes for the night at a motel, make sure they're in a well lit area where they can be seen by people coming and going. Don't park them in some dark lonely corner where a thief can go over the motorcycle undisturbed. Somewhere near the front desk, in the light of the entryway is best. And if you're in a group, lock the bikes to each other. This will make them harder to just carry off or push away. This is especially important when you're staying at a motel that's on a main travel byway, where everyone's transient.

6) Don't Be A Hero. Lots of people park their bikes just outside their room, thinking they'll hear a thief and will disturb them in the act; let's think this through. It's 3am and you hear someone trying to steal your bike, so you run out in your underwear into the pitch black parking lot and say "stop, thief!" – how well do you think that's going to turn out? You have no idea how many people are out there, if they have weapons, if they're some harmless kids or hardened criminals. Call 911, call the front desk, call your psychic advisor, don't rush out looking for a confrontation.

7) Totally Unpack The Bike And Leave Panniers Unlocked At Night.

Don't leave even a pair of socks in the panniers at night and absolutely don't lock the panniers or the top case. If you do, a thief will wonder "what's in here?" and might break the lock or the pannier to get in. Depending on what kind of insurance you have, this could be very costly. Make it easy for someone to lift the pannier cover and see there's absolutely nothing inside. Take everything to the room with you.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

8) Don't Leave Passports, Cash, Or Any Valuables In The Room When You Go Out.

Parked the bike and going out for dinner and drinks? Don't leave your valuables in the room. If anything gets stolen, are you going to hang around in town until the crime is solved? No, and a thief knows that. Don't leave anything in the room safe either – stuff gets stolen from room safes all the time.

The roads, the things you'll see and the people you'll meet while riding in America will make an impression that lasts a lifetime. Make sure you take home only the best memories – be smart, follow our tips and ride safe! Need to hire a motorcycle in America or want to do a Guided Tour? [Contact us!](#)



A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Tips for Renting a Motorcycle in America

So you're going to America to do some motorcycle touring and plan to hire a bike – great!

Here are four important things to consider before booking a motorcycle rental:

1) Are you doing a round trip or one-way? This is a very important question. Many small motorcycle rental companies (and even some larger ones) require that you return the motorcycle to the same place you rented it. That's OK if you're staying in one place and doing local riding or if you can loop back on a longer ride. But what if you want to ride from Las Vegas to San Francisco, ride the Four Corners or perhaps do a US Coast to Coast ride? Check with the bike hire company and make sure you can do a "one-way" rental. We chose to work with EagleRider because they have many franchise locations across the USA, which enable you to choose where you'll pick up and drop off your bike. This enables you, the rider, to custom build a tour itinerary that works around your schedule. In most cases, a one-way surcharge fee applies.

2) Touring solo or with a pillion? A Harley Fat Boy or a Triumph Bonneville may look cool cruising down Sunset Boulevard, but if you run into a rainstorm high in the Colorado Rockies, you'll be wishing you rented an Electra Glide or a Goldwing. For longer tours, where you'll be out on the road for days, we recommend renting a purpose built touring motorcycle. They always have better weather protection, luggage capacity, passenger comfort and, surprisingly are no more expensive to rent than other bikes in the EagleRider fleet. If a big touring bike seems intimidating, the Harley Davidson Road King is a good alternative. It's got less luggage capacity and passenger comfort than an Electra Glide, but a lower center of gravity for easier control at low speeds.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

3) How many days and miles will you be riding? Even if you're not bringing a pillion along, you might want to consider hiring a bike with good luggage capacity. We always seem to bring along more gear than we need on longer rides and the saddlebags always seems to be smaller than we need! Dedicated touring bikes like the Honda GL 1800 Goldwing or the Harley Davidson Electra Glide include a topcase, with plenty of space for camera gear, laptop or a full face helmet. Of course, a longer tour minus the mod cons can be very satisfying and if you pack very light, a Triumph Bonneville with a windshield would make for a memorable ride. A BMW R1200GS is a good compromise as well, as it offers light, crisp handling, good weather protection and hard bags with good capacity.

4) What level of insurance is offered for your rental? This can seem a bit complicated, but it's not really. Basic liability insurance is required for all motorcycles to be ridden on public roads in America, but you can also purchase insurance that covers damage to the bike, with a set deductible. You can also purchase additional liability insurance in case you injure someone else. When calculating how much your total rental quote will be, make sure to consider what basic insurance fees will be required and what, if any supplemental coverage you'll wish to take. Make sure to ask about the various coverages when reserving your bike rental, so you're not surprised when you get to the rental location.

5) Lastly – you MUST be a licensed motorcyclist and provide documentation which proves this. Make sure to bring your license as most bike hire companies will not rent you a motorcycle without proof you're licensed to ride in your home country. Also, most companies require that the rider is a minimum of 21 years of age.

Hope this was helpful! Wherever you live in the world, if you want to rent a motorcycle for your holiday in America [Contact us!](#)

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

Which Harley Should I Choose For My Tour?

Which Harley Should I Choose For My Tour? If you're not a Harley Davidson enthusiast, it can be a bit difficult to figure out what the actual differences are between models. While traditional and cool, names like "Street Glide", "Road Glide", or "Electra Glide" don't really provide any clues as to the features of each bike. Even the written specifications of the bikes aren't that helpful – many of the bikes share chassis and engine configurations. So how do you know which Harley to choose if you're doing a Guided Tour or bike hire, covering thousands of miles? (Note: we also have Indians, BMW GS & RT, Honda Goldwing, and various Triumph models available. [Contact Us!](#) for your bike hire needs!)

First thing to understand is that there are four categories of bikes in the Harley Davidson lineup: Sporter, Dyna, Softail, and Touring.



As there are not too many Dynas in the EagleRider fleet, we'll stick with the most popular lines: Sportster, Softail and Touring.

1) Sportster: The Sportster has a few things going for it: low seat height, light weight (compared to other HDs), lighter handling and simplicity. If you're concerned about your physical ability to put both feet on the ground while sitting on the bike or the weight of the machine, the Sportster is a good choice. It's a wonderful bike for shorter rides. Unfortunately, it's smaller displacement (883 cc) and petrol capacity (3.3 gallons) relative to the bigger Harleys becomes inconvenient on longer rides. On a long day's ride, you'll be fueling up quite a bit more often than bigger bikes, with their 6 gallon tanks. As such, we don't recommend the Sportster as the ideal choice for touring. For riding around Hollywood or the Vegas Strip looking cool however, two thumbs up!

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

2) Softail: The Fat Boy and the Heritage Softail are the two most popular bikes in this line. Softails are named so because while they look like rigid, hardtail style bikes and they have a hidden shock absorber under the bike that soaks up the bumps. So you get a very clean look without exposed shock absorbers and a much more compliant ride than a hardtail.

These bikes also feature the HD “B” motor, which has a counterbalancer inside to decrease vibration. Softails have a unique mechanical feel due to this motor and suspension combination that’s hard to describe – we’d say it’s a slightly more hardcore ride than a pure touring Harley. Also these bikes typically feature pegs for passengers, not floorboards and more narrow pillion accommodation than the touring models. The Heritage Softail provides the most pillion comfort of all the Softail models, so if you’re planning on bringing a passenger along, choose the Heritage

3) Touring: OK, we’ll admit it: the touring models are our favorites of the Harley Davidson range. Why? Because to us (and mind you we have over 100,000 miles of touring experience in America) they just feel the best to ride long distances on. Much of this is down to two things: their chassis, which features a dual shock air suspension and the rubber mounting of the engine, which isolates the rider and passenger from much of the vibration. The touring chassis has just superb road feel, there’s something about it that’s very special. But even between touring models, there are significant differences.

The Street Glide and Electra Glide feature the classic Harley “Bat Wing” fairing, which provides superior wind and weather protection and includes speakers and a CD Player/radio.

The Road King models, which we absolutely love, have a detachable windscreen, providing less wind and weather protection and of course no CD/radio. But it’s very nice to take the screen off on hot days or rides around town, provided you have someone to carry it for you.

A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

The touring models all feature floorboards for the rider and most also include floorboards for the pillion as well, which provides extra comfort and a feeling of increased stability for passengers. The Street Glide, however, uses passenger footpegs, which we feel are a bit less comfortable than floorboards (the Street Glide also has a slightly lowered suspension for a “slammed” look, which makes it somewhat less bump compliant than the other touring models). Lastly, the only Harley with a stock topcase is the Electra Glide Classic; we love the topcase as not only can it carry a lot of additional luggage but it acts as a backrest for pillions. (Note: some locations can attach an optional topcase to Street Glides and Road Kings).



A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

A Note About Weight and Size

Often, people will mention to us that they don't want to hire an Electra Glide Classic as they feel it will be too big, too heavy or unwieldy. They're missing out because the Electra Glide is the most comfortable Harley, especially for a pillion. If you're not height challenged, have average upper body strength and are an experienced motorcyclist, you should have no trouble with the bike. All Harley's have low centres of gravity. Of course, if you fully pack the panniers and top case and add a pillion, you need to adjust and find the balance point, as you would on any bike. We find that balance only becomes an issue at low speeds, especially in parking lots. But again, that's on any fully loaded bike with a pillion.



A GUIDE TO US MOTORCYCLE TOURING

A Note About Ground Clearance on Harleys

If you've never ridden a Harley before, then you need to adjust to the Harley's reduced ground clearance versus other bikes. A Harley is a cruiser, low, long, and lazy – if you throw it into a corner like a sportsbike you're first going to hear a lot of grinding metallic sounds as it warns you “hey, I'm not that kind of bike!” If you persist in leaning further, chances are you'll end up on your ear. You need to roll into corners on a Harley, and feel out how much clearance you have – this applies to almost every Harley especially the bikes equipped with floorboards. Once you get used to it, you can ride a Harley in a very spirited manner through the corners but remember: there's an adaptation period.

