

# APPAREL PRO: TOURING GEAR



Comfort, flexibility and visibility are all vitally important for long distance motorcycle riding.



If you've read my column for the last couple of years, you probably know that I am a big fan of long distance motorcycle travel to exotic places. To me this means traveling in motorcycle apparel that fits well, is protective yet comfortable enough to ride in all day long and can accommodate a wide range of temperatures. But don't just take my word for it. I opened the question of comfortable touring apparel to two experts: tour company owners whose jobs are to ride all day, every day... all year long.

Gretchen Beach, of Beach's Motorcycle Adventures, is a 'dress for the slide, not the ride' kind of girl. "I look for gear that fits comfortably, is waterproof while still having as much venting as possible, and has adjustable pads," says the European touring professional. Her favorite apparel features are finger windshield wipers on gloves, boots with arch support and a thick high heel to help reach the ground on a taller bike.

"I can't live without my heated jacket and I prefer one with multiple temperature settings. My jacket has a back pocket that holds my rain overjacket so I can travel without saddle bags if I am just out for a short ride," said Beach. "I've seen pants that have a zip off bottom few inches to easily adjust for the height challenged. That is really cool!"

Beach's pet peeve apparel failures include gloves that bled color onto her hands when wet, and apparel that is not made for a woman's body. Curvy women must often purchase pants that are too big at the waist so they can fit female hips, but then the legs are too long and/or the pads are not in the proper place. The best solution is for dealerships to stock woman-specific motorcycle apparel; there's no reason not to these days with all the options on the market and women accounting for 25% of all riders who swing their leg over a motorcycle.

Skip Mascorro, founder of MotoDiscovery, says that comfort, flexibility and visibility are all vitally important to him. "For day in and day out comfort, flexibility is essential, no matter what gear you have. Having riding apparel that permits the rider to adapt to the many conditions one can encounter is essential. Features such as removable liners to adjust to temperature extremes, vents to allow a free flow of air to the body when it gets hot and, of course, the ability to stay dry when it rains, all come to mind."

Comfort is largely a matter of good fit, according to Mascorro. There are little things, however, that make the difference. For example, the material that comes into contact with your neck. Does

it chafe or soothe? Do the zippers mate up easily or do they bind? Are your suit pants easy to get on and off? Personal preferences enter into this, however these seemingly small features and more can enhance or detract from the overall touring experience.

"Of the many questions we receive concerning preparations for a MotoDiscovery adventure, riding apparel tops the list and for good reason. In addition to the obvious protection your body will have in the event of a collision or 'get off,' you will want to be comfortable day in and day out. Comfort means minimizing fatigue and lends to a more enjoyable touring experience," says the Latin America touring expert.

One small feature Mascorro wishes every motorcycle apparel item had? The convenient see through waterproof pocket on the top of the jacket forearm. It's a nice place to stash toll money and to plant your keys when you get off the bike.

Smart touring enthusiasts know that good riding gear makes sense. You can spend a lot or a little, but the important thing is to have it and use it. Encourage your customers to purchase the most comfortable and best made apparel they can afford. ✍