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# Pittsburgh Rides: The Biker's Camping List

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Garry Nelson's motorcycle camping list

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By Garry A. Nelson

"I got so tired of forgetting things on trips like this; I made this [list] up and store it in a file at home to check off when I am ready to go," Robert M. Pirsig says in chapter four of "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance."

With the above comment he includes an extensive packing list of stuff that was required in the mid-'60s. It seems hard to believe that he stowed all of that gear on a small Honda 305 Super-hawk.

I never made a packing list -- what can a fellow forget on a motorcycle trip? This was all well and good until I forgot my sleeping bag on a Canadian tour when the first night's temperature dropped to 42 degrees. This does not sound cold, but try sleeping on a pad in jeans and a waxed cotton jacket when one is freezing. The next night I made a list on Parry Sound's Kitchner Motor Lodge stationery.

Common sense and space prohibit me from providing a complete list of what one needs to pack on a motorcycle trip, but I can break it down into categories, and you can

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fill it the blanks, depending on your requirements and what you glean from Mr. Pirsig's list.

- **Clothing:** Dependent on trip duration and weather.
- **Tank bag:** Ear plugs, logbook, note cards, maps, flashlight, corkscrew, army knife and black markers.
- **Personal:** Dopp kit, duct tape, transistor radio, towel (I always forget one), washcloth, pain relief for the aches of touring, and a crystal drink glass.
- **Parts:** Tools, flat tire repair kits (or credit card for overnight parts orders)
- **Camping equipment.**

Camping reduces the cost of a trip as two tents can be placed on each \$15 state camp site, after dark a third can be surreptitiously erected should the need arise. Sitting around a picnic table, bathed in the glow of a candle lantern, sipping out of my crystal glass and discussing the day's events is the perfect way to end the day.

Camping needs by function:

- **Shelter:** Tent, sleeping pad and bag or blanket; electric lantern for tent use.
- **Cooking:** Stove, skillet, can-opener, European espresso maker, coffee cup. Tabasco, utensils and a candle lantern for picnic bench use.

Breakfast comes after approximately 75 miles of morning riding and it is best enjoyed in a local diner/restaurant. The local denizens make for better conversation and stories along with hints of interesting attractions and the long shot of someone providing detailed directions to a defunct antique American motorcycle.

Lunch is usually fruit or a gas station sandwich eaten during a stop where boots can be removed for a brief nap while watching the clouds move across the sky. This respite recharges one's attention for the second half of the day. During the lunch break maps are checked for a state park that we can reach by 6 p.m.

To paraphrase Peter Egan, my favorite Cycle World Magazine columnist, "I cannot remember the last motel that I stayed in, but I never forget a campsite." The time spent talking and drinking around a camp fire beats TV in a motel room every time.

Garry Nelson is an attorney in Pittsburgh.  
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