

Rider Education Report

As I am writing this March Newsletter article, I am watching yet another snowfall but thinking forward to Wing'D Rider Rally #3. I know that now is the time to start planning for the week-long tour that will be my big adventure this year. South Dakota is an interesting part of the country, where the weather can provide constant change, the elevation can vary from 3,000 to over 8,000 feet and require a rider to bring additional gear to have a comfortable and safe experience. Additional gear means additional weight and requires additional packing strategies. This month, let us call it part 1, I will present the realities of packing for a long trip on a motorcycle. For this article I am going to provide specifics for the machine I know best, my 2004 Honda Gold Wing, but other, maybe most, motorcycles are going to be extremely similar relative to the challenges involved.

The first thing to do, if you have not done it recently, or have never done it, is to read your owner's manual. There is a plethora of information about your specific motorcycle for that exact production year to be found between the covers of the manual, and I suggest you focus on the sections describing loading your motorcycle and adding accessories, as these subjects have significant effect on performance and handling. And they all relate to the safety of you and your passenger.

In my manual, information on accessories and modifications begins on page 4, indicating the importance of these topics. The third point written in this section of the manual is *"Do not pull a trailer or sidecar with your motorcycle. This motorcycle was not designed for these attachments, and their use can seriously impair your motorcycle's handling."* Immediately following point three is point four, which is *"Carefully consider the weight of any accessories and any cargo stored in those accessories to avoid exceeding the maximum weight limits...see Load Limits, page 44."*

When I turn to page 44, I see a listing for the maximum weight and the distribution of that weight for this 2004 Gold Wing. The listed maximum weight of the rider, passenger, and all cargo and accessories is 417 pounds. Of these 417 pounds, the manual further defines that a maximum of 71 pounds can be loaded onto the motorcycle in the form of cargo, distributed as listed in the chart on page 44. This means that if I maximize the amount of cargo the bike is designed to carry (71 pounds) then what is left is the total amount of weight for the rider, passenger, and any accessories (like GPS, helmets, gloves, boots, jackets, Kindle, air deflectors, belly pans, etc.), which is 346 pounds. I just got dressed in all my gear that I would normally wear for a long ride on a 65-degree (Fahrenheit) day. I tipped the scale at 166 pounds, ready to ride (which in my case means 16 pounds of gear), leaving 180 pounds for my passenger, air deflectors, GPS, etc.

As a reference, I just took a two-week business trip to Germany. The weather was remarkably similar to the weather in Northern Kentucky, without the extreme highs or lows. I packed very efficiently and carried a total of 65 pounds of clothing and gear for the two weeks. I mention this because this trip was just me, and just with work clothes, toiletry items, and a laptop. No specialized protective gear. If there were two of me, like there might be on our trip to Wing'D Rider Rally #3, I am sure I would have to double that amount. As you can see from the numbers above, this would not work, and choices would have to be made. Next month we will cover the specifics of practical solutions to keep you comfortable and safe on a long ride.

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