

# Tour Riders, We Are!!

With the GWRRA “rally season” upon us, we’re thinking now is a good time to go over some “do’s and don’ts” of tour riding. One of the reasons we have those big, comfortable riding machines is that they allow us to ride for hours on end... literally!! But, is that a good thing? Read on....

Many of us are preparing for the LA District Rally (yeeehawww!!), the TX District Rally and, of course, Wing Ding. The idea is for us to climb on our big, bold Gold Wings and head off down the road for distant destinations. Like any athlete, we need to start easy with shorter rides lasting only an hour or two, a hundred miles or so, and then start lengthening time and distance. Ease into the riding season rather than pushing the limits without the “warm-up.”

Now, with that being said, let’s talk about riding length both in distance and time as mentioned above – what we need to think about is how far is too far, and how long is too long? Both of these questions are interconnected – think about the age, health, riding time, and physical ability of both the rider and co-rider. Most of us don’t have “iron butts”, and so have no business attempting all day rides covering hundreds of miles. It takes the fun out of riding if either the rider or co-rider becomes tired and/or uncomfortable. This is the way we look at it... we figure 300 miles to be a recreational day, 400 miles is more like a work day and 500 miles in one day is overtime.

Our experience is that frequent stops can make a long days ride more pleasurable and fun. A couple of years ago when going to Honda Hoot, Mike Fogarty was riding with a hurt back. We stopped every hundred miles or so, so that he could stretch out. The weather was pretty warm, but these frequent stops gave us a chance to cool down, discuss the next hundred miles and when we arrived at our destination for the day, we weren’t completely worn out. The ride was much more enjoyable and since that time, we have pretty much stuck to the 100 mile rest stops. That may seem like a lot of stops, but it has worked very well for us, so you might want to give it a try.

Overriding in one day can lead to mental breakdowns as far as riding skills and decision making. Therefore, consider length and time whether riding alone or with a group. Set markers of how long to ride, how far that will be, where the stops occur, and so forth. Pick out the factors which make the ride enjoyable, safe, and reasonable.

Another important factor to consider in tour riding is the weather – where you kind of have to “go with the flow”... that is, on warm days, you might want to leave early (anywhere from 6:00 am to 7:00 am) and end your riding day early (early afternoon), allowing for time in the pool to cool down and then for a leisurely dinner. Likewise, on cold days, you might want to leave a little later (8:00 am to 9:00 am) to allow for the day to warm up a bit after the sun (hopefully) comes out. If you should run into severe weather (rain, thunderstorms, snow) we suggest stopping or delaying your day’s ride until the severe weather has passed. If severe weather catches you during your ride, try pulling into a shopping mall (the ladies will love that!) or how about taking in a movie, until the bad weather eases up?

**KEY QUESTION:** Wouldn’t you rather arrive at your destination late than not at all?

Heat and cold affect us as riders and co-riders dramatically, and it doesn’t matter which we are; if your internal thermostat indicates uncomfortable hot or cold, then the ride becomes an endurance ride rather than a fun and pleasurable ride. The rider and co-rider need to determine just what conditions make riding a chore, and what conditions are tolerable. **Ride smart** by not pressing on when temperatures or other significant weather makes it unsafe to be on the road.

Just a message on cold weather, which fits into the above, but bears being given a little space of its own. Just as heat stroke disables or kills, so does hypothermia. Of the two, hypothermia is less recognizable and therefore more dangerous when it occurs. It is summer you say? Riding at any elevation when it has rained or hailed and at highway speeds lowers the air temperature dramatically. The body may be damp

or wet and therefore gives off body heat rapidly causing the blood to thicken, which then causes the mind and body to slow down in functioning. If you are wet and cold together, you need to get out of those cold, wet clothes and warm up before hypothermia sets in. And, get to know the signals and signs for hypothermia so the rider and the co-rider can monitor each other for safety. Remember, you the rider, and your co-rider are the only ones who can make the decisions necessary to ride smarter and, in turn, safer.

So, to put it in a nutshell... put your "thinking caps on" and use your decision-making ability to make your riding season the best season yet.

As always, we welcome and encourage your questions and comments. Please don't ever hesitate to contact us if we can be of help.

**Ride safe, have fun and always take the long way home.**

**Gene and Carolyn Tice**

**ATGATT Master Tour Riders #5088 & #5089**