



Motorcycles

Hit the Open Road

Motorcycles unlock our dreams of adventure and freedom

Ever wonder why so many people enter this world, and never look back? From reconnecting with the driving experience to cost savings, motorcycles offer a thrilling, one-of-a-kind adventure every time you hop on.

RECONNECT WITH LIFE

Closing ourselves up in a passenger cabin seals off the wonder of the world around us. On a motorcycle, you feel the breeze as it runs past, the landscapes take on new detail and every curve becomes a personal experience. This lifestyle has always been associated with exploration, mainly because you won't necessarily be limited to the pavement. Motorcycles can take you places other vehicles simply can't. But even if you stay on the beaten paths, there are few experiences that make us feel more alive.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The social aspect of this culture is another reason so many people are attracted to it. There's a sense of accomplishment in mastering the special driving skills needed to operate a motorcycle. It's the same when you complete a long and adventure-filled run. The maintenance requirements are unique too. That's part of why motorcycling creates such a



© ADOBE STOCK

close-knit sense of community. When you gather with other enthusiasts, you know they've put in the work to get there. At the same time, you can swap helpful tips on keeping your motorcycle running, tales from the road, and plans for future rides.

BIG SAVINGS

There's an obvious adrena-

line rush when you hit the open road, and plenty of new friends to be made. But motorcycles are more than your ticket to adventure. They're a proven cost-cutting option. You'll save lots of money on fuel when compared with traditional transportation. Maintenance and insurance costs may also be lower. Add it all up, and there

may not be a more affordable way to get from one point to another.

RULES OF THE ROAD

Just remember that there are some inherent dangers in this pursuit. You won't have a surrounding metal cabin in case of a traffic accident, so your full attention is required. Take

advantage of recommended safety equipment that's meant to protect you, and make sure you remain aware of potential hazards like deteriorated road conditions or other drivers who haven't noticed your bike. Newcomers should consider taking a safety course; completing it may even make you eligible for lower insurance rates.

Picking the Right Bike

Warmer months may have you thinking about a new purchase

There are a number of important factors at play when deciding to buy a motorcycle, including what you'll be using it for, what you want to bring along, how many people are riding and how much power you'd like. Price is usually a concern, as well. Here's a look at the different options that are available:

STANDARD

When considering speed, price and position, standard motorcycles are the cheapest, most straight-forward option. Offered in basic models, they feature medium-sized engines on user-friendly frames and upright seats, with easy-to-reach handlebars and foot pegs. They're ideal for newcomers, or people who won't be riding very often or very far.

CRUISER

On the other hand, cruiser motorcycles are more difficult for those with less experience, because drivers lean back. It's a position that can be difficult for the unfamiliar, in particular with high winds or poor road conditions. Cruisers typically have lots of low-end power, thanks to a V-twin engine, with high handlebars and pegs in a forward position.

TOURING

If you're more of a long-haul



© ADOBE STOCK

type, a touring bike might be the best choice. They boast the typical upright seating, but with larger engines for more fuel capacity and additional storage options. Protective fairings at the front of the motorcycle are larger, in order to block wind and rain. Needless to say, all of this makes the machine a good bit larger — and the price tag, too.

SPORT

Looking for a bit more zip? Sport models feature high-performance engines, and lighter frames for quick acceleration. You'll ride more parallel with the motorcycle to help reduce wind drag, meaning the handle bars are bit further away.

DUAL-SPORT

Those interested in off-road

options should test drive dual-sport options, which are also known as adventure-sport or dual-purpose motorcycles. These street-legal dirt bikes are made to handle more rugged terrain, and the lightweight frame and smaller engines are ideal for novices.

MOPEDS AND SCOOTERS

If you're an urban or down-

town dweller, lightweight models might be worth checking out. You won't reach highway speeds, since they only come in sizes 50cc to 500cc — but that's plenty of power to get you around in the average metropolitan area. Mopeds are on the 50cc side, with a bicycle-type frame. Some even boast electric motors.

Maintaining Your Bike

The best-running motorcycles are always going to be the best cared for

Your motorcycle will arrive with the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule, typically in printed form for new purchases. If you buy used, go online to find out more. These are critical details in maintaining your bike so that it runs for years to come.

WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT

When you're riding a motorcycle, you don't have a passenger cabin to protect you from wind, sun and rain in the event of an unexpected problem on the side of the road. You also won't typically have the space to carry commonly needed maintenance tools or products like motor oil. Check your levels before every trip, in particular if you're headed out on a long adventure. And follow the expert's maintenance schedule to the letter. On newer bikes, your warranty may depend on it.

OIL CHANGES

Generally, you should change the oil in your motorcycle roughly every 3,000 miles or so. The filter, on the other hand, should be changed every 6,000 miles—or every other time. Check with your manufacturer, however, because they may require a different frequency, or even a recommended brand. Either way, only use



© ADOBE STOCK

formulas that are specifically made for motorcycles, since oil for passenger vehicles is not recommended. Oil formulated for bikes takes into account how it runs to protect internal parts, including its unique clutch.

Keep an eye on coolant levels, since these engines run at such high temperatures. Low

brake fluid can also lead to catastrophic consequences. If the printed version of your maintenance schedule has been lost and you can't find it online, check in with your local dealer. They'll track down the specific manual needed for your bike, while providing other needed information.

CHECK THE TIRES

Recommended pounds-per-square inch for your bike can also be found in the owner's manual, along with pressure details about specific conditions like heavy loads. Motorcycle tires are smaller and so they naturally wear faster than other models, so the National Highway Traffic

Safety Administration recommends checking your pressure before every ride. Improperly inflated tires can lead to extremely dangerous situations that may be deadly. Luckily, motorcycle tires typically have handy built-in indicators to highlight tread wear. When the tread reaches the indicator arrows, it's time for new tires.

Which Helmet Is Best?

Key factors to consider when buying this life-saving equipment

Helmets save thousands of lives each year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Unfortunately, hundreds more will unnecessarily perish because they don't make use of this easily found, highly adaptable form of protection. Still, not all helmets are alike — and choices you make when buying them will go a long way toward ensuring they fit well and work properly. You might even gain access to some cool new tech.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Let's face it, riding a bike can be dangerous. Motorcyclists are killed 28 times more frequently per mile traveled than their counterparts in passenger cars, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Meanwhile, those motorcyclists who use helmets reduce their risk of head injuries by a stunning 69%, and the risk of dying by more than 40 percent. There are also many, many more fatalities in states without universal laws governing helmets. Consider wearing one, either way, since these injuries and deaths are so much more common for those who don't. There are larger implications, too: Economists have estimated that the health-care savings associated with helmets is in the billions annually.



© ADOBE STOCK

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

The average helmet sizes mimic those of baseball caps, with small, medium, large and extra-large versions. Unlike those hats, however, there are considerations involving how the helmet covers your cheeks and neck. That's why trying them on is so crucial. The cheek pads should touch your

face, without being uncomfortable. The Motorcycle Industry Council also cautions against any gaps at the brow or temple. The neck roll should not push the helmet away, and any full-face elements should never touch your nose when under pressure. Make sure the strap is secure, and move the helmet side to side and up and down. Your skin should exactly

follow any movement.

LATEST FEATURES

These aren't your grandfather's motorcycle helmets. Today's models can come complete with a number of innovative features meant to increase safety and improve the overall experience. Helmets can now connect

with your phone for hands-free call options, or connect with Bluetooth to play your favorite music. Some will keep the motorcycle from starting if the helmet isn't in range, acting as a kind of high-tech key. There are also wireless charging options, and emergency features that alert the authorities in the event of an accident.

If You Need to Haul It

We'd rather ride, of course — but sometimes it isn't possible

The most exciting path to any destination will always be in the seat of your motorcycle. That's why you purchased the bike in the first place, right? Depending on a series of outside factors, however, that simply may not be feasible. Luckily, you can always haul it.

WHEN IT HAPPENS

Perhaps you've bought a new home and will be driving the moving van. Maybe you've broken down. You may also be taking an exciting camping trip in your RV. In each case, it makes more sense to place your bike on a trailer so that you can get it there safely. But it's not as straightforward as simply placing the motorcycle on board, since improperly towing it can cause serious damage. If you're paying someone else to ship it, for instance, they may require that the machine is completely drained. Even if you're hauling the motorcycle yourself, your specific insurance policy may also require that the bike is emptied of all fluids. Check with your agent.

ON A TRAILER

Open trailers are fine for shorter trips, but the enclosed versions are preferred for long hauls. You'll be keeping your motorcycle out of the wind and weather as you travel. Make sure any trailer is hitched and



© ADOBE STOCK

level before bringing the bike up. Position the motorcycle so that the front is secured by a wheel lock, and that the kickstand is down. Anchor the machine with tie-down straps attached to heavy-duty rings at the front and back. Tighten these straps with a ratchet

until there isn't any slack at all. Then remember to inspect it all periodically as you travel.

WITH YOUR TRUCK

You'll need a sturdy bike ramp, and tie-down straps in order to secure the bike to a truck. You'll also need a buddy

to help out. One of you should push while the other steers the motorcycle into the bed. There is a serious risk of injury if the bike reverses back down the ramp, so make sure everyone can comfortably manage the load. Once inside the truck bed, secure wheel locks and

put the kickstand down. Your tie-down points should be at 45-degree angles, with at least two straps in both the front and back to create a tight hold. Never use mirrors or mufflers to secure the bike; the frame and handle bars are more secure.

Making A Career of Your Passion

Here's how to convert this pastime into a moneymaking opportunity

By their very nature, motorcyclists are specialists. They operate and maintain specialty items that require in-depth knowledge of a unique piece of equipment. This culture and community is also unlike any other. Those who gain enough knowledge and expertise might be perfect candidates for turning it all into a new career, if you know where to look.

MOTORCYCLE WRITER

Enthusiasts are always looking for fast-changing helmet technology, the latest discoveries in motorcycle trips or gathering points, and up-to-date details on upkeep and new models. Leverage your knowledge by joining the staff at a motorcycle magazine or website. Freelancers can earn money, while enjoying the flexibility that comes with no signing on for a 9-to-5 job.

Consider launching your own stand-alone hub for information, tips and chat. You'll be building a new place for the community to gather, while potentially opening the door for still more job opportunities down the road. And remember that it doesn't have to be a tricked-out internet landing spot: Social media pages devoted to hobbies like this one are very popular, and some sites have advertising



© ADOBE STOCK

opportunities that can bring in lots of extra dollars.

MOTORCYCLE DETAILER

Most bikers want their motorcycles to run smoothly and look even better. Unless you keep them in storage, however, motorcycles are in constant need of washing. Make your own splash by offering knowledgeable detail-

ing services in your community. You don't need formal training or education so much as an in-depth knowledge of what they're looking for in a wash service. As you complete these tasks, word-of-mouth referrals in the tight-knit riding community should bring in still more business. Visit rallies, bike shows and other events where you know motorcyclists will gather, and

share business cards or sales information to gain their business.

MOTORCYCLE GUIDE

Even the most experienced rider may not know all of the ins and outs of your area of the country. Consider becoming a tour guide to fill that need, and you'll combine a passion for the open road with

a money-making proposition. Show fellow enthusiasts local attractions, taking breaks to explain their historical importance, or strike out on long-distance journeys that take in even more of your area. Just remember that there may be required insurance and licensing involved, depending on where you live. So contact local authorities before getting started.

Beginner Tips

Riding safely starts with your helmet, but it doesn't end there

Motorcycles have never been more powerful, nor fellow drivers more distracted. This can create a lethal mixture when you're out and about. So take needed precautions to keep yourself safe. That may mean taking an instructional class or being honest about your experience and knowledge. Double check everything on the bike itself, and never count on others to see you.

YOUR FIRST MOTORCYCLE

The first and best advice for new riders is not to buy more bike than you can handle. Start with smaller, more easily driven models and then work your way up. How do you know? Ask around to find out more about the experience of others. Take a test drive — or several. Research will help you determine the model and size that fits your specific needs.

Read buyer testimonials and reviews on manufacturer websites and online forums. All of this information should lead to a smart purchase. Once you have it home, it's particularly important than beginners don't simply grab their keys and hit the road. Improve your odds by studying the route in case of construction or traffic issues, planning for changing weather patterns and taking advantage of all



© ADOBE STOCK

safety gear.

USE YOUR HEAD

Government studies confirm, time and time again, that motorcyclists are safer when they wear a helmet. Hundreds of those who don't wear helmets are senselessly killed each year. Even the survivors are an incredible three times more likely to have a

brain injury. Consumer Reports found that motorcycle fatalities immediately shot up between 20 and 30 percent in states where helmet laws were repealed. Explore the different styles and technology associated with the newest models, while making sure yours is fitted properly. Choose a light-colored helmet, if possible, in order to attract

the notice of potentially distracted motorists. Then wear it, each and every time you ride.

WHEN YOU'RE OUT THERE

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation reminds riders that motorists often have trouble seeing us and reacting in time, so make sure your head-

light is operational. Leave it on whether it's day or night. Apply reflective decals on the bike, and wear brightly colored clothing. As you slow down, flash your brake light so that it's more noticeable. Use your horn, if necessary. Dress in long pants, long sleeves, gloves and boots that go over your ankles for added protection.