

Planning a Ride

Part of being a road captain is planning rides. Although there are no definite set of rules for planning a ride, here are some tips used you should think about when planning your rides.

There are a number of things you should consider when planning a ride.

1. Destination
2. Ride Route
3. Departure time
4. Return time
5. Gas Stops/breaks
6. Lunch

1. Choosing a Destination

There are no rules for setting a destination. Pick a direction and go. Part of the fun of being a road captain is getting to choose where we ride to. If you like it chances are the people in your group will like it also.

Be aware that we have a no alcohol policy, so a ride to a drinking establishment may not be the best choice. Also be aware that most people are there to ride, so if you pick a route that has a 2 hour lay over at the destination try and choose somewhere that has a lot of general interest.

Most often there is no “Destination”, the goal of the ride is to enjoy the scenery along the route

2. Ride Route

Choosing a route is fun. We are lucky here in North CA we have a lot of great roads to choose from. The most fun route is one that has varied road types, and varied scenery.

Things to look for:

- Routes with low traffic
- Routes that have at least 2 lanes
- Paved roads

Things to avoid

- 1 Lane roads for long periods of time Some of these are fun, we do ride them but you need to plan
- Poorly paved roads
- Routes that are all Highway
- Routes with lots of lights and stop signs

None of these things are hard fast rules. Sometimes to get to a great road or a great restaurant you need to drive through a heavily trafficked town. Just keep these things in mind while planning.

If there is a route that has special issues such as twisties, extreme cold, 1 lane roads, poorly paved roads, extreme heat, or long distances, let people know in the ride description. The group has riders of many different skill levels. Let them decide before hand what their comfort level is.

The time of year is also an issue. Typically during the winter months you want to choose shorter routes. People can get cold, so planning the route for the weather can be important.

3. *Departure time*

The best riding time is daylight. Choosing your departure time is affected by the weather and the length of the ride.

During the winter, if the outside temperature will be 57 during the day it can be 35 at 8 am. The later in the day you leave, the warmer it will be. Remember if you plan a ride for 8 am, people have to be there at 7:30. That means they have to leave their homes by 7 – 7:15. Rides that leave between 10 and 11 in the winter make the best of the warmer part of the day.

4. *Return time*

When planning a ride you want to give people a close approximation of a return time. Remember you want to be home before dark. If you pre-ride you have an idea of how long the route should take. You should probably add 10% fudge factor. The group rides slower than you might on your own. Also make sure you leave 20 minutes for each gas stop or break and 1 hour 30 minutes for lunch.

5. *Gas Stops/Breaks*

Gas Stops: Older Sportsters and the new VROD need to get gas about every 110 – 120 miles. Dynas every 160 miles. Softtails and Touring every 160 – 180. Plan accordingly. Most people prefer brand name gas. Our group tends to avoid Shell if we can and seems to prefer Chevron. This is not a hard and fast rule, but a preference. Sometimes all that is available is off name gas.

Look for stations with:

- Rest rooms. Preferably 2.
- The more pumps the station has, the quicker the group can gas up.
- Pick stations on the same side of the road you are traveling.
- Make sure they have room for bikes to park after they gas up.
- If they have a coffee station even better
- Easy access into and out of the station

Watch your time. Conversations can get away from you and what you might think is 20 minutes can quickly spread to 30 or 40.

Breaks: There are many factors that effect how long you can go between breaks. We typically break after riding for 1 – 1 ½ hours. Typically a break is 20 minutes. Make sure there are restrooms available at your break stops. Some hints:

- The earlier in the morning you leave, the more coffee people drink. After 1 hour they are ready for a bathroom break.
- After the first break or if the ride left after 11:00 people can go up to 1:45 without a break if you need to
- After lunch again try to break after an hour, people drink a lot at lunch and a break is usually welcome in 60 – 75 minutes
- Later in the day people get tired. After 3:00 you want to break every 60 – 75 minutes
- If its very hot or very cold you want to break every 60 – 75 minutes

Watch your time. Conversations can get away from you and what you might think is 20 minutes can quickly spread to 30 or 40.

6. Lunch

Live to ride, Ride to eat... Choosing a restaurant again can be fun. Make sure the restaurant can accommodate your group's size. If you can, make arrangements with the restaurant ahead of time. We often tell the restaurant we will give them an exact count the morning of the event. If we call before we leave the dealership they are usually ready for us when we get there. If possible arrange for the restaurant to give separate checks.

Plan on 80 to 90 minutes for lunch. Be aware of your time. It's easy for conversations to get away from you and lunch spread to 2 hours.

Managing an accident scene

Although we do everything we can to ride safely accidents do happen. It happens few and far between, but sometimes we need to manage an accident scene.

In the pre-ride we talk about what to do if a bike stops.

1. Keep riding the sweep will stop
2. The Sweep will call 911 if needed

Although we tell people these things, when an accident occurs, it's not easy for people to keep riding. Everyone wants to stop and help.

As road captains we each have specific roles in managing an accident scene

Sweep

The Sweep owns the accident scene. They are in charge of managing the people and events at the scene. Things to do when you are the sweep

1. Make sure that where you pull over you are safe. Your own safety is #1
2. Assign someone to manage traffic flags at the scene
3. Assign someone to call 911 or you call 911
 - a. If you assign someone tell them to call 911 and come back and tell you when they get through
4. Attend to the victim
5. Assign people to move the downed bike(s) to a safe location if safe to do so

Lead

The role of the lead is to manage the people not in the accident. People want to help. However, having everyone milling around the scene can hamper rescue workers and put uninjured riders in danger of being in traffic. Lead the group to a safe spot and pull them over.

If you are not in radio, visual or cell phone contact with the sweep or a road captain at the scene, send someone back to speak to the sweep and find out if you should take the group on or wait for the sweep and people helping to catch up where you are waiting.

People will try and pull over if they see an accident. If you see no one is following you, stop, pull over and encourage people not involved in the accident or attending to the scene to follow you way from the scene. People are looking to you to tell them what to do. Tell them what you are going to do and have them follow you.

If there are a lot of people at the scene not involved in an accident, actually helping, or not a witness, get them to move away. Try and get them to go with you to a safer location.

Mid

As a road captain in the middle you have some decisions to make. The closer to front of the pack you are, your role is to help the lead keep the pack moving, encourage people not to stop, and try and get them to a safe place.

If you are close to the end of the pack you have to decide if the sweep needs help. If so you can stop and help the sweep. Remember the sweep owns the accident scene so take direction from them.

If there are a lot of people at the scene not involved in an accident, actually helping, or not a witness, get them to move away. Try and get them to go with the lead to a safer location.